

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Altick's *Paintings from Books: Art and literature in Britain 1760-1900* has just been published. T. J. Binyon is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

Dana Breen is a psychoanalyst and the author of *The Birth of a First Child*, 1975, and *Talking with Mothers*, 1981.

Jorge Calado is Professor of Chemical Engineering at Cornell University and Professor of Physical Chemistry at the Technical University of Lisbon.

Sherban Cantacuzino is Secretary of the Royal Fine Art Commission.

Lord Carver's *The Seven Ages of the British Army* was published in 1984. His *Dilemmas of the Desert War* will be published this summer.

Glyn Daniel is Emeritus Disney Professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge. His autobiography, *Some Small Harvest*, is to be published in the summer.

Debra Donoghue is Henry James Professor of English and American Letters at New York University. He is the author of *The Sovereign Ghost: Studies in Imagination*, 1978, and *Ferocious Alphabets*, 1981.

Jana Stina Ewbank is Professor of English Literature at the University of Leeds. She is the co-editor of *Shakespeare's Styles*, 1980. Her *Macbeth* in the Penguin Masters Study series will be published shortly.

St Lawrence Gowing is a painter. His most recent book, *The Originality of Thomas Jones*, was published earlier this year.

Peter Green is the James R. Dougherty Professor of Classics at the University of Texas, Austin. He is the author of *A Concise History of Ancient Greece: To the close of the classical era*, 1973.

Tony Harrison's *Selected Poems* was published in 1984. His most recent publication, *Dramatic Verse 1973-1983*, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Christopher Hawtree's anthology of the magazine *Night and Day* was published last year.

Reginald Hill's novel *No Man's Land*, was published in 1985.

Michael Hoffman's new collection of poems, *Artemis*, will be published later this year.

Simon Hornblower is the author of *The Greek World 479-323 BC*, 1983, the second edition of which came out last year.

P. D. James's crime novels include *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, 1982.

Mary Lefkowitz's *Women in Greek Myth* will be published in the summer.

Adrian Lyttelton is the author of *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919-1929*, 1973.

Edward Mendelson is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and the author of *Early Auden*, 1981.

Janet Morgan is the author of *Agatha Christie: A biography*, 1984.

David Nokes's *Jonathan Swift: A hypochrite reversed* was recently awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for the best biographical work published in 1985.

P. K. O'Brien is Reader in Economic History at the University of Oxford. He is the editor of *Railways and the Economic Development of Western Europe 1830-1914*, 1983.

Sean O'Brien's first book of poems, *The Indoor Park*, 1983, won a Somerset Maugham Award in 1984.

Anthony O'Hear is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bradford. He is the author of *What Philosophy Is: An Introduction to contemporary philosophy*, 1985.

Sir Brian Pippard was until recently Cavendish Professor of Physics at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *The Physics of Vibration*, 1978 and 1982.

Roy Porter's *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* was published in 1982.

Peter Reading's latest collection of poems is *Ukelele Music*, 1985.

Alan Ryan is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. His *Property and Political Theory* was published in 1984.

Lorna Sage is a Lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

J. E. Ties is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Reading. He is the author of a monograph on events and identity, *Things That Happen*, 1981.

John Ure is British Ambassador to Brazil and the author of *The Trail of Tamerlane*, 1980 and *The Quest for Captain Morgan*, 1983.

Chris Wallace-Crobb's most recent collection of poems, *The Amorous Cannibal*, was published last year.

W. L. Warren is Professor of History at the Queen's University of Belfast. He is the author of *Henry II*, 1973.

Stanley Wells is General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare. His *Re-Editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader* appeared in 1984.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Psychoanalysts in English universities: information about or reminiscences of Dr William Brown (Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy at the University of Oxford) or Dr John T. MacCurdy (Lecturer in Psychopathology at the University of Cambridge); for a study.

Brett Kahr, Department of Psychology, Yale University, Box 11-A Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520, USA.

Eva Gore Booth and Esther Roper: any information or papers; for a biography.

Clifford Lewis, 31 First Turn, Upper Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8AH.

Alexander Adam, Rector of Edinburgh High School, 1768-1809: present whereabouts of Adam's MS Memoranda; for research purposes.

A. John Murray, 11 Brae Park, Barnton, Edinburgh EH4 6DJ.

Hokusai's prints: any information; for a catalogue raisonné.

Peter Morse, PO Box 22759, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, USA.

William Morris/Christina Rossetti: present location of first editions of *The Defence of Guinevere* (1858) and *Goblin Market* (1862), both inscribed to Jane (Burdon) Morris and believed to be formerly in the possession of Sir Herbert Thompson (d 1944 in Bath).

Jan Marsh, 25 Ebbelene Avenue, London N10.

Eileen J. Garrett (1892-1970), psychic and parapsychology research subject in England and America 1920s-1970: anecdotal, personal, or research/medical information; letters, family history, or other material; for a biographical psychoanalytic study.

Joan Healy, 74-03 Commonwealth Boulevard, Bellrose, New York 11426, USA.

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Cover picture

Three elevations of Gropius's proposed Theatre of Karkor (1930-31). The concept of a people's theatre able to accommodate popular festivities, sports meetings and political meetings as well as cultural events was new at the time. In Gropius's realization the traditional space between stage and auditorium was to be eliminated. Although his project was highly commended by the jury, they eventually preferred the plans submitted by the Weissen brothers who were thought to have found a more successful solution to the problem of merging actors and spectators. The views are reproduced from *Rassegna* 15/3, September 1983 (124pp, Milan; Rassegna, 88 289 0033 4), a special issue of the periodical dedicated to Gropius.

The theory and the practice

Joseph Rykwert

REGINALD R. ISAACS
Walter Gropius: Der Mensch und sein Werk
Two volumes, 1,283pp. Berlin: Gebr. Maon.
DM 48 each volume.
37861 1272 6 and 37861 1398 X

Walter Gropius is a difficult case: of all the masters of the Modern Movement (whose public reputations must now have reached their lowest point) he is the least sympathetic. The son of an architect in government service, and great-nephew of Martin Gropius, who controlled architectural education in the Kingdom of Prussia, he was the archetype of a Weimar intellectual. He was famous as the founder, director and architect of the legendary Bauhaus and he went on to be the head of the architectural school at Harvard - the perverter (some say) of all post-war American architecture. He was also famous as the second husband of the equally legendary Alma Mahler. As a man he seemed to have fewer redeeming features than many of his kind. He lacked the patrician orotundity of the Mies brothers, or the drooliness of the pseudo-proletarian Brecht; his pinched, humourless egotism was unrelieved by sparkle. Such humour as he displayed was of the galling phlog kind.

Although he is credited with a great quantity of building he has not, unlike several of his contemporaries - Erich Mendelsohn, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe most obvious among them - charmed posterity through a legacy of brilliant, graceful drawings. His relation to architecture was dominated by the fact that he was a clumsy draftsman, and that he actually disliked drawing - both free-hand, and at the drawing-board. This naturally made the business of building that much more a matter of his commanding personality: and it is clear that he had a very powerful effect on anyone who came into contact with him. He could not

always have been quite as disagreeable as I have so far implied, since the bitter quarrels of his life are balanced by long and faithful friendships - and many students remained loyal to him into his old age.

Obviously, the biography of such a person has to be some kind of apology; but Reginald Isaacs, formerly Gropius's young colleague at Harvard, seems unaware of this necessity and has merely provided us with a biography. Gropius himself designated his biographer and his widow collaborated with Professor Isaacs who was also given access to his papers as well as to those of a number of his intimate friends. Isaacs has done his work conscientiously, and for the sake of completeness has had to repeat a great deal that has already been told by others, so that even revelations of the most private kind do not relieve a certain tedium. The early story of the Bauhaus, for instance, was told in some detail more than ten years ago by Marcel Franciscoco, and indeed the whole Bauhaus epic has been charted by Hans-Maria Wiegler. Isaacs relies on both their books; and yet, although generous and usually convincing about the *Mensch*, he is all too curt about the *Werk*. His publishers may well think that with the handsome catalogue of Gropius's work compiled by Winfried Nerdinger from the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard and the Bauhaus Archive in West Berlin they have done their duty: in fact Isaacs, whose plates (and more than half are personalia) are miserable, is not much use for any architectural purpose without Nerdinger - whose book was unfortunately published too late for inclusion even in the bibliography.

Another and similar problem - perhaps the main one - with *Walter Gropius: Der Mensch und sein Werk* is that Isaacs has a critical view of the man: of his vanity and humourlessness, his antisemitism and snobbery, which are all shown to his disadvantage though with a proper sympathy for the hero; but the work he accepts blindly (I weigh my words) and quite uncritically. To take one example: the crucial

disagreement with Johannes Itten (whom Gropius had met through Alma Mahler in Vienna) and the evolution of the Bauhaus "Ground-course" are barely outlined, although they were to be the basis on which all Anglo-Saxon art teaching was reformed during and immediately after the Second World War. Arguably Franciscoco and Wiegler have already done this work - and so, rather partisanly, has Itten. Yet Gropius's part in all this is still not clear. To compensate, Isaacs has a curious account of the role played in Weimar by the redoubtable and distasteful Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, and her unsuccessful attempts to mediate between Gropius and his Belgian predecessor, Henri van de Velde.

Perhaps Gropius's biggest difficulties were his private ones: about these Isaacs writes extensively. For the first time his relationship with Alma Mahler is seen through Gropius's, I suspect rather more sober and accurate, record. They had met in the spring of 1910 (at a sanatorium - where else?) to which Alma had retreated for respite from the nervous strain of living with Gustav Mahler; Gropius was there for respite from the administration of his own office. At once Gropius became, as it were, her Walther von Stolzing, her handsome, noble (despite his middle-class background) knight. The affair came to Gustav's knowledge because Gropius misadvised to him a rather explicit letter meant for her. The ensuing crisis led to Mahler's famous consultation with Freud. Unfortunately, for this crucial detail Isaacs has had to rely on Alma. At any rate, that time round Gropius lost her to Mahler, "the sick, beautiful child" (Alma's words). But when Gustav died (on Gropius's twenty-eighth birthday in 1911) he began to pay court again.

Things took a strange turn when, eighteen months later, Oskar Kokoschka exhibited a painting called "Into the Storm" (very recognizably a self-portrait with Alma) in the Berlin Sezession. Gropius had not really been told about the association, but the picture's message was explicit: there followed an angry

silence between the two, except for a few chilly letters.

Gropius was by then a well-known and successful architect. Some would say that he had achieved his two masterpieces: the Fagus-Werke (a shoe-last factory in Prussia) and the Model Factory which was one of the showpieces of the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne. Both owed an enormous and evident debt to his master and former employer, Peter Behrens. The originality, the "modernity" of the Fagus-Werke now seems the product of a brilliant sleight of hand. Gropius appropriated the elements of Behrens's best-known building, the Turbine Hall for the AEG in Charlottenburg, and inverted them. While Behrens's building looked like a heavy vault carried by massive, rusticated and sloping pylons at each corner, with vertical glass walls stretching from floor to ceiling, Gropius made the entrance of his building through a centred, heavy pylon, rusticated just like Behrens's, the flat roof of the building being supported on gently sloping brick piers which barely interrupted the horizontal bands of glass and metal panelling - a curtain wall which wrapped round the corners. With the Model Factory he incurred similar debts and played with different, novel notions - the vertical stroking of the wall, and the free-floating roof-planes which probably owed something to Frank Lloyd Wright. But, if that is the sort of thing you want to know about, you will not find it in Isaacs's book.

You will, however, be able to learn that Alma Mahler had meanwhile broken with Kokoschka. In August 1914 Gropius, who had been a volunteer reserve officer (Isaacs reproduces a photograph of him in his chocolate-soldier hussar uniform, looking as if it had been hired from a theatre costumier's), went to the front with his Cologne triumph still fresh; he was decorated early in the campaign with the Iron Cross and promoted. Alma then returned to her handsome, brave and brilliant (and now decorated) former lover: they were married in August 1915 in Berlin. Mahler was their only

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child: whom the whole world knows as the "angel" to whose memory Alban Berg dedicated his Violin Concerto. But wartime Gropius made an awkward and fitful spouse. Alma was after all the daughter and stepdaughter of famous artists, and the widow of one of the greatest musicians of her time; she had a brilliant circle of associates and friends; Gropius came from a more conventional and provincial background, and was relatively unworried. His army leaves were brief and irregular, and as the war progressed there was less of the hussar and more of the bedraggled working soldier about him. Moreover he spent much of the last two years of the war running a training centre for messenger-dogs: important war-work, no doubt, but hardly fit for von Stoltzing. And how was Alma to explain that to her smart friends.

At any rate, Gropius went from training dogs via another spell at the front, and the front Cross (1st Class), to Weimar and the Bauhaus. Alma declared herself delighted with the prospect of Weimar but meanwhile began a liaison with Franz Werfel, who was to become her third husband. She told Gropius so little about herself that he only discovered the affair through overhearing a telephone conversation, after the only child of that liaison, a hydrocephalic boy who died in infancy, had already been named Martin Gropius. For a short time Alma seemed to have hoped that there might be a *ménage à trois*.

In spite of such private problems, which might have prostrated a weaker man, Gropius set out to run an institution which was chronically short of funds, whose brilliant teachers were at each others' throats, and to which there was strong political opposition. How he held it together for ten years is unimaginable: that alone was a masterpiece. The Bauhaus was a rather small school through which, in its thirteen years of existence, fewer students passed than pass through most art and design schools in three. Yet for better or for worse the Bauhaus was (with the one exception of the Moscow Vkhutemas) the only art school in this century in which a collective theory of art and of art-education was put together. It depended on Gropius's conviction about the much-maligned "total" design: that the ultimate work of art is the building, and that the figurative arts and design depend on the building as the essential human artefact. That was the message of the Bauhaus manifesto of 1919, and however much Gropius may later have diluted it, Bauhaus theory as well as his own stature depended on it.

But the buildings he created also pose interesting problems. The two early "masterpieces" were followed after the war by a series of minor works. These were done in association with Adolf Meyer, who had been his partner since they left Behrens's office, and whose part in the achievement, in view of Gropius's distaste for drawing, must have been considerable; it is unfortunate that the prophet of teamwork and anonymity should have wanted to relegate Meyer to the status of a "paid assistant". Clearly, the sleight of hand at the Fagus works could have been achieved by giving verbal instructions; but the excellent detailing of the Cologne factory must have been Meyer's contribution. The circumstances in which the fifteen-year-old partnership was dissolved to 1925 are still not clear; but if the way in which Gropius worked is of consequence, then this break matters, particularly as it occurred at the time when the Bauhaus was moving from Weimar to Dessau and when Gropius's third truly important building, the Dessau Bauhaus, was designed and built. Since the Dessau school, paradoxically, did not have an architecture department until 1928, Gropius's own office there served as a surrogate faculty, and it was at about the time of Meyer's departure to the town-planning office in Frankfurt (he was to die in 1929) that the new school building was designed. It is an achievement Gropius never again equalled.

One would have preferred a little less gossip in this book and more hard facts about the Bauhaus associates, Marcel Breuer, Fred Forbat and Pankas Molnar, whose drawings give the best image of Gropius's work of the 1920s and 1930s. As for those of his own drawings which survive, they show him to have been competent – but no more. Gropius himself might have defended Isaac's neglect of his

associates on the ground that the Gropius of the work was an idea, almost a myth: much as Le Corbusier maintained that the private person, Charles Edouard Jeanneret, was distinct from the public figure and that therefore his earlier pre-Corbusier work should not be published "pour ne pas confondre les idées aux gens". Similarly, Gropius claimed in his later *Kulturträger* years that the early Bauhaus manifestos and his Expressionist work before 1923 were a concession to the difficult times, and an appeal to the young. Here Isaac's archival work is revealing. It shows Gropius to be expressionist through and through:

I am a wandering star in the firmament, I am bound by no anchor or chain, I wander into the wilds when I suffer, and turn to others when I am fulfilled and giving. . . . You wanted me and I gave myself to you, and that was fine and clear, two stars which united their blazing flame. . . .

He wrote this (and more in the same vein) in a private letter to Lily Hildebrandt, the woman to whom he was closest in the period between the end of his marriage to Alma and his second marriage to Isé.

When he retired from the Bauhaus in 1929 and moved to private practice in Berlin, he had only four more years left in Germany. In spite of his lengthy protestations of loyalty and quintessential Germanness, he was clearly a *Kultur Bolschevist* and after the Nazi seizure of power he soon realized that it would be prudent to leave. So he left for England, where he was much welcomed in the "progressive" English milieu and befriended both by the likely (Julian Huxley, C. H. Waddington, Jack Pritchard) and unlikely (Neville Chamberlain, Lord Eustace Percy) and where he found work. Together with Maxwell Fry he hoped to build a block at Christ's College, Cambridge, as well as two large slab blocks at St Leonard's Hill, overlooking Windsor Great Park (as Isaac clearly shows, this latter project failed not because of prejudice or phillistine xenophobia, but because the developers' financing was mishandled). Impington Village College and the house (now rather unfortunately disguised) for Ben Levy and Coonstance Cummings in Old Church Street, Chelsea, are the only real mementoes of his London partnership with Fry, which lasted from October 1934 until March 1937. Yet the climate seemed propitious: the Royal Institute of British Architects was celebrating its centenary at that time, and

the Prince of Wales addressed the assembled architectural nobles – Giles Gilbert Scott, Edwin Lutyens, Harry Goodhart-Rendel – in terms which Gropius (who was also present) approved of entirely:

We are now living . . . a life which is far more collective than individualistic . . . I feel that you could develop the idea of widening [the] streets and raising the height of buildings . . . so that you would get an area with houses wider apart . . . which would tend to greater openness and less congestion. . . . Our great commercial and industrial concerns . . . have shown what can be done with mass-production . . . I am sure that the principles of mass-production can be applied to building. . . .

Gropius could almost have written the speech himself.

But England was only a port-of-call. America beckoned; the Chair of Architecture at Harvard was about the grandest thing it could offer – and did. There Gropius finally settled. It was not until he felt safe in the United States and had applied for American citizenship that he began to speak more freely about events in Germany. Although even then he was prudent, and, for their part, the German authorities were quite pleased to see a German citizen, not a Jew, as head of a prestigious department in a most prestigious university.

Gropius surrounded himself with ex-Bauhausers like Marcel Breuer, who became his first American associate, and Herbert Bayer: together they rediscovered New England weatherboard (or clapboard) for modern architecture, and clearly they were good for each other in those early days. But although their first houses (beginning with Gropius's own) were successful, when the larger commissions began to arrive, a curious decline set in. "Walter would be all right, if only he would get rid of those fresh-faced young men", his successor at Harvard, Joseph Louis Sert, is said to have remarked. But in fact he needed them if his ideas were to take flesh at all: as he had needed Adolf Meyer or the Bauhaus Hungarians. The last work of Gropius's in which the touch of a master is still recognizable is the Harvard Graduate Center of 1948: a modest group of two, three and four-storey buildings, for whose public rooms Gropius invited Joan Miró, Hans Arp and his old colleagues, Josef Albers and Herbert Bayer, to provide paintings and reliefs. It is not a vast success, nor an

overwhelming piece of architecture, but it was the last time that Gropius effectively acted on his belief in the unity of the arts.

After that the fresh-faced young men took over. In spite of the echoes of the old faith even in his last writings, Gropius's doctrine, once emasculated of its expressionist component, was very flat. Which is why his name is attached to some abysmal enterprises: the former Playboy building in Park Lane in London shows just how rapid (to put it kindly) his influence could be. Unfortunately Isaac, though he has put together a vast amount of material, does not help to establish how great an architect Gropius really was, though for over half a century the collective which went by his name was responsible for some remarkable buildings as well as some real innovations: the reinterpretation, or rather inversion, of Behrensian classicism before 1914; a contribution to the brief but fruitful Novembergruppe-expressionist period, 1918–23/4, and finally the assertion of the building as a work of art, and the unity of the visual arts against (yes, against) the "functionalist" atmosphere of the late 1920s and 1930s. To what extent was he an agent in these situations, and to what extent simply a brilliant absorber of the local colour? Isaac has all too little to say about this, or about the decline of the great man when he forsook that major achievement.

Gropius had really worked out his pedagogic method after 1923: it was identical with his theoretical assumptions as an architect. Yet it had two conflicting components, and the inherent weakness of his position was that he could not resolve the conflict: his pre-1923 belief that the building was the ultimate work of art was not reconcilable with his faith in anonymity and teamwork, or indeed with the increasing scale of his commissions; and this Isaac will not acknowledge. Again, many of the troubles of the American modernists are due to Gropius's insistence that the past was of no consequence to an architect (everything had, after all, to be invented anew). He drew his strength from his first grand vision, but as he extracted it from its great context it became defenceless as a small out of its shell. Hence the weakness of the later teaching and the poverty of the buildings. Though, as the masters of the Modern Movement return to favour, the decline should not be allowed to diminish the earlier achievement.

High-tech hero

J. M. Richards

BRYAN APPEYARD
Richard Rogers: A biography
360pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571 139760
FRANK RUSSELL (Editor)
Richard Rogers Architects
160pp. Academy Editions. £15.50 (paperback, £12.95).
0312 682077

The only criticism of Richard Rogers's buildings that Bryan Appleyard's highly readable biography does not try to answer is the long-term one that they won't make very good ruins. I suppose it would be said that there is no need for them to; the logical outcome of Rogers's "high-tech" style is a building that can be dismantled when finished with and its components re-used to build something else. Although he has not reached that point yet, he has given us images and structures which dramatically underline the extent of the changes the newest technology can contribute to both the spatial and the aesthetic conception of a building, and it remains to be seen whether such spectacular achievements as the Centre Pompidou in Paris (the work of Rogers and his Italian partner Renzo Piano) and the just-completed Lloyd's building in the City of London will be as impeccably maintained as "high-tech" architecture requires. To keep it as bright and new-looking as a well-oiled piece of machinery is a necessity it has not yet allowed itself capable of meeting.

Richard Rogers's biography is an unusual mixture of personal history and architectural

analysis. Appleyard's detailed account of Rogers's childhood, of his years as a student and of the uncertainties of his early career, is written in a somewhat gossipy style more usually found in books about film-actors and sporting heroes – we are even told what Rogers and his wife were given to eat when they dined with the Queen at Windsor Castle. And yet when Appleyard comes to describe Rogers's emergence as a successful architect and the beliefs and principles he soon began to evolve, the writing is serious and illuminating. Appleyard takes pains to place Rogers's and his partners' designs within the context of the Modern Movement, the origins and nature of which he sums up admirably with only a few minor historical errors. These passages provide a link between the private and the professional sections of the narrative because Ernesto Rogers, one of the most notable Italian architects of the Modern Movement, was Richard Rogers's uncle. Until his death in 1969 he was clearly a powerful influence on his nephew, and it is a pity that Appleyard has not been able, even at second hand, to convey a clearer picture of his endearing personality; in which, as far as I can still recall, were combined something of the appearance of a clown, all the instincts of an artist and the incisive mind of a philosopher.

The odd thing about the stage-by-stage account we are given of Rogers's development since childhood is that many episodes seem to have been included in order to explain deficiencies in his equipment as a maturing architect – his late development owing to dyslexia by one such episode – and yet much of his success can be attributed to his possession of just those qualities his childhood problems are supposed to have denied him. Architectural

standards today suffer much, especially in this country, from being based on literary rather than visual judgments, and the literary handicaps resulting from dyslexia are surely at the root of Rogers's success.

One thing Appleyard fails to emphasize is that, for all Rogers's adventures with structures and images, his outstanding instincts as those of a planner. His entry to the ill-fated competition for the extension of the National Gallery was the only one that, if built, would have contributed to the greater coherence of London's open spaces by visually linking Trafalgar Square with Leicester Square, and his abortive Colco Street project for the South Bank of the Thames was, among other things, an imaginative piece of urban regeneration. His Lloyd's building is exciting to look at but its achievement as a contribution to the City lies more in the constructive use it makes of an asymmetrical site.

Richard Rogers Architects is one of those large oblong paperbacks packed on each page with diagrams, photographs and notes that assiduous students no doubt find their way around but which are hard work for everyone else. Its only consecutive text is a two-page foreword by Peter Cook and nine more headed "Observations" which are undoubtedly true, since they employ the first person singular when they are not quoting from other writers, but they are not by Rogers himself. Both he and Peter Cook's essay are barely readable because printed in white on black. However, all the information anyone might want about Rogers's and his partners' projects, built and unbuilt, can be found somewhere in these pages and they contain some of the best photographs of the Centre Pompidou I have seen anywhere.

Harnessing the destructive impulse

Victoria Glendinning

ANDREW MOTION
The Lamberts: George, Constant and Kit
388pp. Chatto and Windus. £13.95.
07011 27317

The remarkable aspect of this book about three generations of a family is not its new material, nor its human drama, though there is plenty of that. Although the Lamberts are not famous as a family in the sense that the Strachays or the Sitwells are, there already exist two biographies of George Washington Lambert (1873–1930), one of his son Constant Lambert (1905–51), and the story of Constant's son Kit Lambert (1935–81) has been told in books about The Who, the rock and roll band with whom he made and lost a fortune in the 1960s. But each of the three operated in a different artistic field, and each has therefore become the property of specialists. By bringing them together, Andrew Motion beguiles those chiefly concerned with the history of Australian art into taking an interest in the modern pop-record industry, while students of British ballet will find themselves learning also about an expedition to the source of the Irti river in Brazil and the life of a jackaroo.

The thesis of Andrew Motion's ambitious saga is that "each child inherited – and exacerbated – the conditions and characteristics which had highlighted his parents"; he cites Larkin's "They fuck you up, your Mum and Dad" to illustrate his point. Motion's paradox is that the Lamberts' creativity depended on "the very impulses which threatened to destroy it", and the qualities which made them feeble and irresponsible were precisely the ones which made them "inventive and exciting". They were not quite first-class: "George was so more a great artist than Constant a great composer", and neither left disciples nor an acknowledged "influence". Their success depended on the fact that they were all period figures, so exactly in tune with their time that when that time passed their reputations faded with it.

Maestro into monster

Michael Tanner

ROGER VAUGHAN
Herbert von Karajan: A biographical portrait
744pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
0297 784048

This book makes one think, though its author would be surprised, even shocked, to bear it. Roger Vaughan is the editor of *The Yorker*, and it was his writings about yacht-racing that led Herbert von Karajan to invite him to write about him, as well as to attend rehearsals and generally to spend a lot of time around him. What resulted cannot have pleased its subject, though he must be getting used to that by now. His last biographer, Robert C. Bachmann, whose much fuller book is not mentioned or even listed by Vaughan (the bibliography must be one of the strangest ever – obvious sources are omitted, while *The Third Man* and *The World of Zen* are included), produced an account so devastating, both in its description of Karajan's career and its analysis of his conducting ideals, that a long battle in the courts ensued. One gets the impression from Vaughan's book that he began as a passionate admirer, but that first-hand exposure to Karajan's personality, his "court", and even to some extent his music-making led to increasingly mixed feelings, honestly recorded here, so that he too has lost favour.

It is the innocence and directness of the reporting that lead one to think. There can be no question that what emerges is the portrait of a monster, someone who is not unwilling to be compared to Hitler (though when Vaughan confronted Karajan with photocopies showing he had joined the Nazi party twice within a month, once in Austria, where it was still legal, and once in Germany, in April 1933, as reported to 1935, the date that Karajan has

George was born in St Petersburg, where his American father, a railway engineer, died before he was born. He went out to relatives in Australia, became a dedicated painter and came to London with his wife, Amy Abell. They lived in an ambiguous *ménage à trois* with the Australian artist Thea Proctor, but George was no lady-killer. He cultivated a hearty, sexless masculinity, "the sort that thrives on fresh air and exercise". In Edwardian London he was a poor man's Augustus John, enjoying flamboyant pranks at the Chelsea Arts Club. He was a show-off with an inferiority complex, much bappier away from home as Official War Artist for the Australian forces, and happier still when he left his wife and family to work in Australia. Motion calls him "the keeper of Australia's artistic conscience": his painting was formal and decorative, snathome to the modernists who succeeded him. His portrait of Thea Proctor is described by Motion as "a masterpiece of orthodoxy", and his painting "A Sergeant of the Light Horse" as "a masterpiece of camp". Motion is anxious to establish that the campiness of George and of his son Constant was not, however, an indication that they were covert homosexuals.

George's sons were neglected by him. Maurice, the elder, became a successful sculptor, but plays only a minor role in this book. Constant, "affeminate and cute" in his father's drawings, had polio, which left him deaf and with a permanent limp. He was a mother's boy; but all this, and his musical precocity, "did not make him conform to any conventional image of a feeble artistic type". He was ebullient and large, and loved women – among them the young Margot Fonteyn, who remains unwilling to discuss the episode.

Constant, the central figure in this triptych, is the most interesting. When he was only twenty-one Diaghilev commissioned him to write a ballet for the Ballets Russes; the year after that, he produced a setting for Sachseverell Sitwell's *Rio Grande* that mixed classical styles with jazz and the rhythms of black music. He worked with the Sitwells on *Ragade*; his was the world of Walton, Berners, Warlock, and the pubs and clubs of Fitzrovia. He was reckoned a wit; Anthony Powell based



George Lambert's painting "Important People", 1914; reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Hugh Moreland in *A Dance to the Music of Time* on Constant.

Constant's tragedy was that "the bulk of his most original and durable compositions" had been completed by the time he was twenty-two. He sustained a long and creative career as musical director of the Sadler's Wells Ballet; Ninette de Valois called him "an English Diaghilev". Yet his contribution to British ballet is neglected by all except the old and the well-informed. He drank like a fish from the late 1930s – "most of a bottle of brandy, at least one bottle of wine, and several whiskeys and pints of beer" every day. He lost his looks, and his job, and the drinking killed him in his mid-forties.

Kit was Constant's son by his first wife. The couple split up after Kit was born – and domesticity did not suit the Lambert men – and Kit was functionally fatherless as his father had been. He hit on rock music as a way of making money quickly, knowing nothing about it; he picked up The Who (then called The High Numbers) in a Harrow pub. As their manager and producer he was inspired, and made them world superstars.

As a child, Kit had said, "I like music that is short and loud, and drinks that are long and fizzy." He had lots of both. The Who's rock opera *Tommy* was performed at opera houses all over the world, including the Met in New York; this fusion of the worlds of high art and popular culture was something that Constant had achieved in his music; but never with such spectacular success. Kit was rich; he bought the Palazzo Dario on the Grand Canal in Venice. He founded the first independent record label, Track, to break the monopoly of the big conglomerates. He pioneered the lighting, publicity and multi-track recording techniques that have since become standard practice, and he was a Svengali to Pete Townshend, who wrote The Who's songs.

Kit drank as heavily as his father had, and from the late 1960s was using heroin as well as anything else he could get hold of. The band's image of druggy erotic aggression and destructiveness ran out of control, and Keith Moon, the drummer, died of an overdose. With Kit catastrophically and permanently out to lunch, the band took steps to unload him. He was finally put under the Court of Protection to save him from bankruptcy. Violent, confused, and paranoid, he died at the same age as his father.

Kit's self-declared homosexuality did not make him happy. He was a small man, as Constant might have looked "if he had been put in a washing-machine and come out shrunken". But even at his most depressed, there was always a woman, and then another, and another, ready to give him a bed and listen to him. Andrew Motion finds it hard to know why they did it.

Women were always at hand to provide fuel for his grand father and father as well. "The Lamberts" is a book about men, but one held together by the lives of women who were allowed to show little sign or to leave much evidence of their importance. Chief among

many is George's semi-abandoned wife, Amy. His prized independence depended on someone supporting him invisibly, and that was her job. He was a little afraid of her – "in howling funk" when her letters arrived.

Amy gave her son Constant a similar example of "powerful maternal womanliness which he both desired and wanted to destroy". She was the chief female in her grandson Kit's young life too, even though his mother remained close to him. When Amy died at ninety-two, a strict austere old lady, having provided an authority figure against which three generations of male Lamberts could creatively rebel, it was her legacy that gave Kit his initial investment in The Who. For all their rebelliousness, all three of these *enfants terribles* retained a basic respect for elite traditions, both socially and in the arts. Even Kit could be pulled up short, says Daria Shivaloff, his chief protector, by her saying, "That's a very ill-bred remark."

The Lamberts, says Motion, were brilliant at initiating projects but overcome by "withering boredom" as they approached completion. In his autobiographical preface "Skating", Motion expresses a similar malaise: life "has been first fear and then the fear of boredom". This has not affected *The Lamberts*, but boredom, or the Lamberts' lord of misrule, may explain the inadequacy of its outworks. There are too source-notes to this book, since "The sources of all quotations are acknowledged in the text." But it is hard to track them down, since a source-book is only named the first time it is quoted from, and it is often unclear whether a quotation is from a book, a letter, or an oral statement. The only way of finding a source-reference, if there is one, is to find the earliest page-reference to the informant in the index. But the entries are arranged thematically under subheadings for all major figures, so the search is laborious. There are many quotations in the text for which it is impossible to establish any provenance – and someone just might want to trace Frederick Ashton's succinct account of Constant as a conductor, to take just one example: "Very good sense of balance, very reliable tempi, very large cock, wonderful rapport with the dancers."

Motion, to judge from his poetry, has respect for the past. As a biographer he is conscientious, non-judgmental and tentative, fastidious not only about drawing morals but about drawing conclusions. This makes it painful for him to make any statement about cause and effect without encumbering it with a sensitive qualification. He begins a sentence about the contributory causes of Kit's homosexuality with the words "To put it bluntly . . ." but what follows is blunt only in the sense that it is not sharp. But he has written an unusual and worthwhile book; and any rule-breaker would be grateful, in the dock, to have Andrew Motion on the magistrate's bench. He is clearly a merciful man, and that is rare. Taking into account the peculiarities of the Lambert family, he is also a merciful biographer, which is rather more rare.

A democratic crusade

Roy Foster

FERGUS O'FERRALL
Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the birth of Irish democracy 1820-30
329pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. £25.
07171 12187

The perspectives of Irish history tend to enforce a relentlessly circular vision, to which even the best-intentioned historians must occasionally succumb. Recent events, for instance, are powerfully reminiscent of the 1820s and 1830s. Douglas Hurd, pilloried for re-routing Loyalist marches last summer, appeared as a Whig Chief Secretary of Grey or Melbourne vintage, abandoned uncomprehendingly to the mercy of Orange zealots. The "moving statues" of Ballinacorney showed the Catholic Church controversially lending its support to supernatural intervention in everyday life, just as with the "miracles" performed by Emmet in 1823. Even more recently, Unionist frenzy at the co-optation of John Hume into Westminster and Whitehall cabals vividly recalled similar reactions to Daniel O'Connell. Fergus O'Ferrall is too good a historian not to know the dangers of such easy analogies, and he generally eschews them. But he is prepared to run the risk of present-mindedness by opening his definitive history of Catholic Emancipation with a reference to the New Ireland Forum Report of 1984, and closing it by conjuring up "a comprehensive Irish nationalism that would comprehend the pluralist origins of the Irish people". The absorbing story that comes between the two reflections, however, does not provide unimpaired support for his optimism.

O'Ferrall is as much preoccupied by the broad question of "the birth of Irish democracy" as by the specific emancipation of Catholics; this is what gives his book its major importance, and sets it above previous studies. (Indeed, a cogent appendix details just how hedged the technical "emancipation" was.) He has already staked out the ground with an important thesis, a first-rate short biography of O'Connell, and a number of articles. Like all other scholars in the area, he is indebted (as he generously emphasizes) to Professor Maurice O'Connell's tremendous labour of love and scholarship in editing O'Connell's entire correspondence. But *Catholic Emancipation* is especially remarkable for the range and cohesiveness of its primary sources: little-used collections of family papers, unexpected local newspapers, and the archives of Protestant political clubs are plucked as well as the papers of the Catholic Association. Some of the sidelights have been anticipated in earlier work (such as the intriguing detail that the strategy of a parochially based "Catholic Reo" was actually originated by William Parnell in 1811); but the

original contribution of this book is to illuminate the organization of Catholic Emancipation at local levels, and to show how it related to political mobilization across the spectrum, from green to orange. The actual response to the Rent plan in County Longford, for instance, is monitored through 1824-5; the principal organizers are profiled; through subscriptions entered, and objections registered, a vivid picture emerges of what political organization meant. O'Ferrall tells us what the movement actually did: publicizing judicial abuses, espousing police reform, representing discontented tenants, and disrupting local Orange power-structures seem to have been at least as important as claiming direct representation for Catholics in Parliament. When Catholic Association candidates began to fight elections a year or so later, the sophistication of their local organizations paid tremendous dividends—nowhere more than in Waterford, where Villiers Stuart's victory over the Boreford interest in 1826 created the vital bridgehead. In this book, for the first time, the texture of the movement has been fully explored—along with its distinctive regional profile (very much a Leinster and Munster phenomenon, as indicated by the maps demonstrating extent of income and density of local organization).

O'Ferrall is equally probing on the subject of O'Connell himself; though having had his say in print already, he firmly subordinates the man to the movement. He examines O'Connell's record on the disfranchisement restriction which was early attached to any promised measure of emancipation, and arguably negated much of its effect; though more could be said on the anti-O'Connell case. He is particularly good on O'Connell's cavalier treatment of Ulster; with him as with Parnell, deliberate ignorance of "the North" may be taken as an index either of nationalist myopia, or of short-term political acuteness. (And, as with Parnell, it has become a bench-mark against which biographers of Irish political leaders inevitably measure their subjects.) It is O'Connell the politician who appears in these pages, rather than O'Connell the folk-hero. Just as significantly, we also encounter the astute and calculating Wellington who is beginning to figure in the historiography of early nineteenth-century politics, and whose misadventure with O'Connell from 1825 is at least as interesting as the steps danced by O'Connell and Peel in the early 1840s.

One reason why O'Connell could indulge in collusive sparring in London was because of the power of his local base in Ireland. But a less easily recognized phenomenon, absorbingly delineated by O'Ferrall, was his stature as a European "liberal": a very avant-garde kind of politician for the United Kingdom of the early nineteenth century. On the Continent, he attracted tremendous attention as a man of the

people; but this reputation was based, not only on his democratic style, but also on his articulation of an inspiring and challenging rhetoric of liberal politics. (Balzac "would like to have met three men only in this century: Napoleon, Cuvier and O'Connell.") Egalitarianism, and the language of civil liberty, came easily to him (he was educated in France, though too much can be made of this). But fundamentally he appealed to moderate constitutional monarchists, rather than to radicals or Bonapartists. Slavs, Czechs and Poles had obvious reasons for admiring him, and did so extravagantly. Significantly, though, his real international importance was as an example to Catholic politicians attempting to define themselves against the state.

How appropriately, then, can he be claimed as a voice for tolerance and pluralism? He assured his Protestant correspondents that he valued their religious commitment and would protect their status; but he wrote to Paul Cullen that Repeal of the Union meant the inevitable and welcome destruction of Protestantism (a purely "political" ethos), and the restoration of Church lands. In this he may, perhaps, speak for a certain tradition of Irish "democracy" rampant to the 1920s and 1930s, and not dead yet, which has little to do with liberalism in any sense. But he should also be connected with a development which O'Ferrall explores with particular flair: the extraordinary growth of "Liberal Clubs" all over provincial Ireland in the O'Connellite era, springing up as a result of the political mobilization spearheaded by the Catholic Emancipation cause. From this point towards like Waterford and Cork participated in a "voel democratic revolution". The political concerns of these clubs were significantly wider than those of the Association; O'Ferrall describes the ethos of the Cork club as "middle-class, commercial, liberal, reformist, constitutional and democratic". Their organization revolved round reading-rooms, lending-libraries and the transmission of political information. The movement spread rapidly through Munster and Leinster, and forms the background to—for instance—Toqueville's and Beaumont's surprising preoccupation with the growth of democracy in Ireland. The movement took in the forgotten and might-have-beens of Irish history. A Cork meeting was chaired by Marx's precursor, the socialist philosopher William Thompson; and in Waterford, a lively organization reflected the great local cotton culture of the Malcomson factories. The Malcomson enterprises are now remembered only by archaeological evidence like ambitiously laid-out model villages, the family's near-monopoly of large houses round the city, and the leather tokens with which they intended to replace money to the local economy. If grassroots "liberalism" in the Irish context apparently withered as dramatically as

the Malcomson empire, this book provides one to ask the reasons why.

Certainly, political organization continued to develop in a far more sophisticated way, far earlier, than traditional interpretations of Irish nationalism allowed; Theodore K. Hoppe's invaluable *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885* (reviewed in the TLS of December 7, 1984) in essence continues the story so intriguingly begun by O'Ferrall. But the ineluctable sectarian reality of Irish politics continued to assert itself; economic developments, north and south, helped reinforce a class alliance on both sides of the religious divide. O'Ferrall is particularly good on the Protestant reaction, notably the understated Brunswick Clubs; as the work of Jacqueline Hill and others is showing, Irish Protestant politics in the early nineteenth century is a far more complex formation than might be supposed. But they are Protestant politics none the less, as O'Connell's were Catholic politics. What O'Ferrall calls, early on, the "grim sectarian context" of the response to the Catholic Association would continue. The famous Clare election, where O'Connell forced the government's hand by himself standing against Vesey Fitzgerald, identified the cause as a purely religious crusade. Priests put the sign of the cross on voters going to the booths, and anticipated "the day that there will be a race after Protestants, as they had after us". O'Ferrall sees the whole story of the 1820s, inspiring as it is, as "giving to Irish democracy and nationalism a sectarian bias which has severely handicapped subsequent attempts to define and gain acceptance for a more comprehensive Irish constitutionalism".

But in fact the moulds had been set long before, and remained long unbroken. Inevitable Irish attitudes, Protestant and Catholic, overcame Whig notions of secular education as well as Davistide ideals of non-sectarian nationalism. And the "pantheon" of Protestant leaders of Irish constitutionalism represents a series of Oedipal reactions against a governing syndrome, not the underground stream of latent "Protestant nationalism" optimistically intimated by so many commentators. Historians of earlier periods laid a false trail by intermittently insisting that the English had not been successfully resisted because the Irish chiefs were attainted "unity": the point being, of course, that this Platonic ideal of "unity" is a bogus conception which never could have existed at the time. In the same way, those who seek a pluralist, comprehensive and liberal Irish nationalism in the modern period may be creating an equally false dichotomy. As a professional creed, it was set hard in O'Connell's time. This is not the least of the reasons why he remains a more interesting and more formidable figure than many of his successors who ostentatiously achieved much more.

natural habitat, especially since, at one stage, he seemed to be Pitt's probable successor. But there was a logic in the situation, even putting aside Grenville's desire to "unfold" his own wings. He had always been a hard-liner on the prosecution of the war and found the concessions to the French in the Treaty of Amiens unpalatable. The immediate cause of Pitt's resignation had been the King's veto on further concessions to the Catholics. Grenville's first post had been in Ireland as Chief Secretary; he was a warm advocate of Catholic emancipation, and, unlike Pitt, not prepared to pledge himself not to bring the matter forward again.

His brief ministry has had a hard time at the hands of historians. The two great talents were gone—Pitt at the outset, Fox after six months. Canning and Castlereagh stood aloof; Dundas was in disgrace. The government got off to a bad start—Grenville's scheme to retain the lucrative Auditorship of the Exchequer was widely regarded as a "job". Nevertheless, the ministry carried abolition of the slave trade, and though the negotiations with Bonaparte proved abortive, they persuaded the vast majority that there was an alternative but to raising sufficient troops, and that meant con-

cessions to the Catholics. Grenville, according to Dr Jupp, handled the matter badly, leaving the King with the impression he had been deceived. For the second time in six years, a ministry was brought down by the King's refusal to yield on the Catholic question. The rest of Grenville's active political life was spent in opposition, in a kind of competition with Lord Grey to see who could provide a more languid leadership.

It cannot quite be said that Jupp has succeeded in bringing Bogey to life—perhaps it was an impossible task. Not once in nearly five hundred pages is he accused of making a joke. "A solemn, solitary figure", the author calls him. In his conclusion he refers once more to Grenville's lack of charisma and suggests that his personal aloofness meant that he was not sufficiently in touch with the opinion of the times. One wonders whether in his long, valuable and careful researches, Jupp did not feel sometimes that he had heard enough of Grenville. Indeed, Grenville himself had his doubts. He confessed sadly to the lack of a "grit" and essential quality: "I am not competent to the management of men. I never was so naturally. He was one of those awkward men, an excellent second-in-command, not quite up to the lead; a sandwich-board, not a flag-bearer like his Dad."

Ethics in action

Jeremy Cater

RICHARD B. SHER
Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The moderate literati of Edinburgh
399pp. Edinburgh University Press. £30.
085224 5041

Richard Sher's book is one of the best works to have appeared so far on the Scottish Enlightenment. The particular aspect he has chosen to study is of central significance, and his conception of it is luminously clear. Though it is a work of profound scholarship, with a full critical bibliography, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* has been designed and written in such a way that it can also be read with pleasure and profit by the general reader.

From about 1760 onwards Scotland was remarkable for the degree of harmony which prevailed between the forces of the Enlightenment and the forces of organized religion. Many of the leading Enlightenment figures were, at the same time, prominent in the national church, active in religious teaching and preaching. Sher has tackled the causes and consequences of this seemingly paradoxical but culturally very fruitful harmony by means of a collective biography of William Robertson the historian, Adam Ferguson the philosopher, Hugh Blair the literary critic, John Home the playwright, and Alexander Carlyle the autobiographer. He has not attempted an exhaustive treatment of any one of them individually. Rather, he has selected for presentation those parts of their life-histories which show them as thinking alike and acting as a group.

In the first part of the book he describes how they came together as young clergymen of similar background and education; how they formed the ecclesiastical nucleus of a young liberal (or "Moderate") party dedicated to the overthrow of the old rigidities in Scottish life; and how, by their own strength and skill and the help of secular allies, they succeeded in winning the enormously important battles of the 1750s and achieving positions of authority or influence. From the early 1760s they could work effectively for the transformation of Scot-

tish culture in accordance with their own ideals.

The second and larger portion of the book is devoted to elucidating the meaning of "Moderatism". Sher has no difficulty in demonstrating that the Moderates' commitment to the principle of intellectual freedom was total. And certainly their overturning of the Scottish tradition of suppressing unorthodox thought is one of their greatest contributions to the extraordinary flowering of Scottish culture in the later eighteenth century. But his attempt to tie the Moderates' own theology into the Calvinist tradition, despite their intellectual libertarianism, is paradoxical; it is also distinctly unconvincing. It was the ethics of behaviour, not the theology of belief, that mainly interested the Moderates, as Sher knows; and he has given us here an extremely probing and satisfying account of those ethics. They were not merely private and domestic, but an ethics of active citizenship, which preached the duty of benevolence, and demanded the identification of personal happiness with the well-being of society as a whole.

Through a series of particular case-studies Sher shows us Moderate ethical theory in action, as his subjects confronted the major issues of the day, and translated their postulates into social and political attitudes. He has traced their active participation to wide-ranging and important debates over militias, Ossianic poetry, colonial revolt in America, and civil rights for Catholics at home. On these matters he has provided a great deal of relevant information and many plausible arguments. But in some fundamental respects his general interpretations seem unwarranted and erroneous. He asserts repeatedly that these five "Moderate literati" were conservatives, "deeply committed to the status quo"; and he suggests, less emphatically, that they were also Scottish nationalists. It would be far more accurate to call them liberals, strongly committed to peaceful transformation, and believers in a broad British patriotism, superior to both English and Scottish national feelings.

But if, in some areas, Sher's conclusions will be subject to scholarly debate, and perhaps rebuttal, there can be no question that he has achieved an enormous amount, for which all those who work in this field must be profoundly grateful to him.

Learning from England

Peter Mandler

MANCARMARIA FONTANA
Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The "Edinburgh Review" 1802-1832
266pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 30333 4
ANAND C. CHITNIS
The Scottish Enlightenment and Early Victorian English Society
201pp. Croom Helm. £19.95.
085664 580 X

The current flood of studies of the Scottish Enlightenment has on the whole collected in two pools. One, represented here by Anand Chitnis, forms a body of work on eighteenth-century Scottish society and civic culture, and the universities at its heart; the other consists of inquiries into the intellectual pedigree and content of "Scottish knowledge". Both approaches have been fruitful, but the former school has betrayed symptoms of a ghetto mentality; while the latter has offered better opportunities for a dialogue with students of English culture and politics.

Mancarmaria Fontana exemplifies the second approach. Her ambition in tackling the *Edinburgh Review* is "to capture... the process of anglicization of Scottish thought after 1790", not to displace the classic histories of the Review's early years. Her book's focus is the contribution made by the Scottish philosophers to the stabilization of English politics as it recovered from the storms of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. She begins, therefore, not with a dramatic scene in an Edinburgh garret, where the Review's founders gathered in 1802, but rather with the French Revolution: "The Revolution and its aftermath forced the Scottish savants to recon-

sider their object of politics, particularly their liberal assumption that commercial society could unfold in any constitutional setting, however authoritarian, so long as its commercial policy was enlightened. The result of this reconsideration was not the setting-up of a Scottish opposition to aristocratic politics, nor rather an emigration of Scottish philosophers to seek a place beside the nation's legislators in London, where they could tutor politicians in the 'science of legislation'."

Oddly, the Scotch Reviewers' experience in England taught them the lesson that their original intuition as to the relative insignificance of political structures was basically correct. In England they found an advanced commercial society and a relatively enlightened political elite eminently susceptible to being tutored in practical and theoretical political economy, despite the manifest irrationalities of their unreformed political system. In Fontana's period the *Edinburgh Review* preached successfully to a Tory Government and an Unreformed Parliament and won famous victories: the repeal of the protective Orders in Council, the resumption of cash payments after the wartime inflation, even the early infiltration of its own cadres into the public services. Although she acknowledges that that infiltration accelerated after the Whigs came to power in 1830, Fontana understands the distance that still separated Scots from Whigs. In their espousal of a moderate Parliamentary reform, the Reviewers steered well clear of political dogmas and couched their arguments in the language of political economy which appealed as much to moderate Tories as to Whigs and Radicals. Fontana argues that not even James Mill could develop a specific programme of political reform from the logical base of his (and the Reviewers') theory of commercial society.

Fervour and apathy

Christopher Harvie

G. C. HUTCHINSON
A Political History of Scotland 1832-1924: Parties, elections and issues
371pp. Edinburgh: John Donald. £20.
085976 1177

Until recently the nineteenth century, the period in which the modern nation was created, was the great "empty quarter" of Scottish history—and its political history was particularly enigmatic. Some researchers had ventured in from the periphery. Quite a lot was known about what Gladstone called the "political birth" of the country in the Reform Act of 1832, when the electorate shot up from 4,500 to 64,447; and the splits in the Liberal party after 1886 which produced a brief Unionist hegemony around 1900, were well covered. But the high Victorian period, from the Disruption of 1843 to Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 1879-80, could only be reached through secondary sources of a partisan if not eccentric nature. These publications were the products of the obsession with Church government which carried Scottish affairs well away, not just from English political norms, but from the politics of any other European industrial nation. Making sense of them involves swallowing unappealing ideologies which were hard to digest even for most of the participants at the time.

I. G. C. Hutchinson, whose book could almost be subtitled "The rise and fall of liberal Scotland", tackles the problem by worrying through the correspondence of political activists, from lairds and lawyers to statesmen, parish ministers and trade unionists. Over 150 individual manuscript collections appear in his appendix, not to mention the papers and reports of a multitude of parties, unions and religious and secular pressure-groups. The result is an enormously detailed and valuable picture of nineteenth-century Scottish politics.

The complexity of Scottish Victorian politics stemmed from the dissolution of the Church of Scotland as a form of devolved government—responsible, for example, for education and poor relief—and the frequently disastrous failure of Westminster politicians to perceive what this meant. Scottish dissent—the "Voluntaries"—was quite different from English dis-

sent, and there was nothing south of the border equivalent to the "Non-Intrusionists": those, mainly Evangelicals, who believed in the right of Established Church congregations to appoint their own ministers. Three-way splits have always been the nightmare of Westminster, and the conflict between these and the Erastian "Moderates" was ineptly allowed to culminate in the withdrawal of most of the Non-Intrusionists in 1843 to form the Free Church and then to deflect the Scottish middle class into the desolate wastes of "controversial divinity". Nominally this benefited the Liberals, but Hutchinson shows that many of them hated one another more than the Tories, for reasons convoluted enough to bewilder Disraeli (in *Lothian* he put the whole thing down to a Jesuit plot and left it at that). Hutchinson's work in the archives captures the peculiar mix of religion and Scottish issues which resulted: "The objection to Knocknalling (a possible Liberal candidate in Kirkcudbrightshire in 1880) is insuperable. . . . He is unsound on Rabbits and he is (or at least was) unsound on the Trinity."

Hutchinson's excellences lie in exploring the aftermath of the Disruption and party organization after 1880, in which he shows how far back goes a seeming tradition of *perfidium incompetendum Scotorum* in political organization, with surges in recruitment and publicity on the part, consecutively, of Conservatives, Liberal Unionists, Liberals and Labour being almost inevitably followed by lapses into apathy and cynicism. Perhaps this was the inevitable consequence of a politics whose business end in London was physically so far removed from the constituencies. He also exercises a self-denying ordinance in only sketching phases already covered by historians—Chartism and the Anti-Corn-Law campaign, Gladstone in Midlothian and Rosebery's agitation for a Scottish Secretary—which makes for a certain asymmetry. His treatment of the material payoff of politics, in patronage and the business careers of such dynasties as the Tennants and Youngers, is attenuated, and on a strong religious-political culture—from Chalmers to Henry Drummond and Robertson Nicoll—he is virtually silent. There is another book to be written here, on the society and ideology of Scottish politics, and it is to be hoped that Iain Hutchinson will write it.

which Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds also had an interest. But even on the subject of physicians Chitnis's confidence seems to weaken the further he strays from the Borders: James Kay-Shuttleworth's Manchester years are handled more surely than his lengthy career in government; minor provincial physicians are given their due while Neil Arnott, who practised in London, is not mentioned. One learns a great deal about Scotland from Chitnis's book, but little about Britain, and it is on that ground that one prefers Fontana's intellectual to Chitnis's institutional approach. The definitive work on the Scottish Enlightenment and early Victorian English society will, of course, take both roads at once.

Bogey at his business

John Cannon

PETER JUPP
Lord Grenville 1759-1834
506pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.
019 820051 7

If Bonar Law is accounted the unknown prime minister, Lord Grenville is surely a close runner-up. There has been no previous biography of him, despite abundant manuscript sources. He held a remarkable number of the great offices of state—Speaker of the House of Commons, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary for ten years during the 1790s, and Prime Minister from 1806 to 1807 (in the Ministry of All the Talents. Why the neglect?

There are two basic reasons. Despite all Peter Jupp's efforts, Grenville remains a dry character, sober, sensible, intelligent, scholarly, industrious, methodical, but distinctly lacking in charm or glamour, even perhaps in human warmth. His nickname, Bogey, hints at a nameless horror, an awful numbness. Though only ten when his father died, he was very much George Grenville's son. His father's unquestionable loquacity as prime minister in the 1760s tormented George III so much that he

declared he would rather see the devil in his closet than Mr Grenville: "when he has wearied me for two hours, he looks at his watch, to see if he may not tire me for an hour more". Business was George Grenville's passion: he was said to have secreted a turnpike bill in his pocket to while away the tedium of a concert. William Grenville, like his father, a younger son with his career to make, had an equal addiction to work, and expected hard labour from his subordinates. It is an admirable quality, though it does not make for sprightly biographies.

Second, for much of his life, Grenville was overshadowed by either Pitt or Fox. William Pitt, his cousin, was only five months his senior, and of such splendid talents that, as long as he lived, he blotted out Grenville's highest ambitions. Coming to Parliament at the age of twenty-two for the family borough of Buckingham, Grenville naturally made his career under Pitt's wing, showing more than common anxiety over money and security. He developed into something of a trouble-shooter for Pitt, partly because of his command of languages and general versatility. He resigned with Pitt in 1801 but did not join opposition, joining forces with Fox, another dominant personality. Grenville in opposition looked out for his

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Motives confused

M. E. Yapp

WM. ROGER LOUIS and ROBERT W. STOOKEY (Editors)
The End of the Palestine Mandate
 181pp. Tauris. £22.50.
 0 85043 014 4
 FRANCIS R. NICOSIA
The Third Reich and the Palestine Question
 319pp. Tauris. £24.50.
 0 85043 010 1

It is commonly assumed that great events must have great causes. The proposition has the merit of frequently inaugurating an intellectually exciting debate and it is much less tiresome than its thriving companion thesis that even trivial events have great causes. Nevertheless, it is wrong, and a consideration of *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, a collection of essays on the attitudes of some of the principal participants in the partition of Palestine towards that event, may show how deceptive the proposition can be.

Over the past forty years, few of the world's problems have commanded so many column-inches as the Arab-Israeli dispute, and it has been generally supposed that the episode which proclaimed that dispute a great event. To explain the foundation of the State of Israel we have been offered the Cold War, imperial strategies, a Jewish conspiracy, and either divine intervention or at least an exhibition of superhuman skill, ingenuity and endurance. The truth is something else, and one of the features of the essays (which sum up ideas worked out by the various authors in major studies) is that they show how confused were the motives of the actors.

The Cold War theory is demolished unintentionally by Oles Smolansky, for his purpose is to show the Machiavellian character of Soviet policy. Other states may issue emigration certificates to Jews out of a desire to rid themselves of an inconvenient group of citizens,

from weariness of importunity, from humanitarianism or from indifference; it is assumed that the Soviet Union did so in 1946-7 in order to inflame the Palestine situation and to embarrass the West. No evidence is cited for this claim and there is nothing to distinguish the policy of the Soviet Union throughout the period from that of the majority of members of the United Nations. The most distinctive feature of Soviet policy is, for want of a better word, its ordinariness. It was a fitting policy for a state which, on Smolansky's showing, gave a very low priority to Palestine.

United States policy in the Middle East has been depicted as the outcome of a mighty struggle between, on the one hand, the State Department's identification of the national interest and, on the other, the domestic pressure of the Jewish vote, which has often been allied to an alternative strategy of imperial interest dependent upon the use of Israel as an American bridgehead in the Middle East. But the leading impression to be gleaned from Peter Grose's essay is of the frivolity of United States policy. Roosevelt had a view rather than a policy - that the Arabs should be cleared out of Palestine to make way for Jews - but he knew nothing of the matter. "What about the Arabs?" Roosevelt once enquired. "Can't that be settled with a little hush-hush?" Truman had no Palestine policy at all until the summer of 1947; before that period he had only a policy for the survivors among European Jewry; they should go to Palestine. Only in October 1947 did the United States declare itself in favour of partition, and at no time did it attempt to coerce Britain into a pro-Zionist policy. Truman preferred to leave the matter to the State Department and made only one decisive personal intervention when he resolved to recognize the State of Israel. His counsel, Clark Clifford, claimed that Truman had been obliged to defer to unbearable pressure from the Zionist lobby, although on another occasion he said that this was not so. Clifford's other attempts to explain and justify the Presi-



Jerusalem, 1948: Brigadier Sholted, the commander of the Jewish forces in Jerusalem and Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah el Tel, the commander of the Arab Legion Forces, argue over a segment of boundary line.

dent's decision in terms of American interests were too feeble to persuade anyone. Truman's ultimate motives are likely to remain a mystery. Certainly, the Zionist lobby was powerful and well organized and the President could not have been indifferent to its arguments. However, on the evidence before us, it would seem that Truman did not succumb to this pressure; rather, he appears to have recognized Israel to oblige that nice Dr. Weizmann. His was a whimiscal policy; the Middle East did not matter so much to the United States that a President could not indulge a little fancy.

Of course there was no reason why either Roosevelt or Truman should have had a Palestine policy before October 1947 because Palestine was none of their business. The British have found it convenient to blame the failure of their Palestine policy on lack of support from the United States; and with that failure the end of Ernest Bevin's master plan for the perpetuation of Western influence in the Middle East. Wm. Roger Louis provides an excellent account of the evolution of British thinking about Palestine during the immediate post-war years but he is too polite about British policy. Bevin's master plan was not much of a plan and had already received a fatal blow when the attempt to reach agreement with Egypt in 1946 failed. Britain could still have solidified on in Palestine if she had thought it worth while, but she did not think it was. Fear of the consequences of leaving Palestine had always been a more powerful motive for staying there than the alleged advantages of the control of Palestine; in the circumstances, Truman was a convenient 'scapegoat' to deflect Arab wrath.

To the Palestinian Arabs, the partition of Palestine was undoubtedly an event of the first magnitude, but in Walid Khalidi's essay they rarely appear, and only as bystanders or predestined victims. His illuminating article focuses (with the help of unpublished Arab League minutes) on the Arab states, for whom Palestine was only one among many divisive issues. When they could not, or would not, take the military decisions which General Isma'il Safwat told them were necessary the only rational course was to seek a political settlement; but the states preferred fantasy to acquiring a part of Palestine.

To the Zionists, the events of 1947-8 represented the almost miraculous culmination of a dream. Yet, to those reared on the single-minded dedication of Exodus Michael Cohen's portrait of doubt and hesitation will be a surprise. In confusion the Zionists accepted partition in place of the projected Jewish Commonwealth of Palestine. Yearfully, they hoped that they would not, after all, withdraw their property from the land they had vowed to build their

Even more was Palestine distant from the concerns of the Third Reich. Lurking in the inner reaches of the German Foreign Ministry was a policy which saw in the Palestine issue a means by which Germany could gain Arab support and challenge Britain's supremacy in the Middle East. But, as Francis Nicosia shows in his *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question*, this notion made little headway in Germany between 1933 and 1939. Three factors governed Hitler's policy towards Palestine: his desire for British support and the continuation of the British Empire; his view that the Jewish problem must be solved through emigration; with Palestine as the most convenient destination; and his contempt for the Arabs. On all these counts it was appropriate to work with the Zionists, and the transfer agreement negotiated with them in 1933, by which Palestine became the privileged location for German Jews, was never seriously challenged. Only briefly, in 1937, when it seemed that an independent Jewish State might emerge from the Peel Commission proposals, were there momentary fears of the emergence of a centre from which Jewish agitation might be directed against Germany. But these fears quickly vanished as Germans became convinced that Britain would not implement the Peel partition.

Although Palestine might provide room for German Jews, it was recognized that it could not accommodate all the Jews of Europe. The Nazi answer to this problem was to seek other Palestinians elsewhere. It is curious to think that if Germany had not lost her colonies in 1919 if Tanganyika might now be a Jewish State; and if the war had ended in 1940, Madagascar might have been another. Only when mass emigration was no longer feasible did the Nazis turn to mass murder.

Nicosia's book does not do more than amplify the details of a policy already described in outline in other works, but the extraordinary depth of his study is useful, and his account is well documented through careful research in both Foreign Ministry and Nazi Party archives.

Investors' world

Deepak Lal

CHARLES LIPSON
Standing Guard: Protecting foreign capital in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
 332pp. University of California Press. £33.25 (paperback, £11.25).
 0 520 03468 6

As finance ministers, bankers and international civil servants scurry around trying to cope with the problems of the Third World debt, Charles Lipson's useful *Standing Guard* provides a survey of the changing political risks which have attended foreign lending during the past century and a half. His major concern is with the risks of expropriation involved in direct foreign investments; he also provides an explanation of why such dangers have increased since the late 1960s and why the alternative form of foreign lending - portfolio lending - which has become the major form of capital flow between developed and developing countries since the mid-1970s (as it was in the nineteenth century), has been relatively more secure.

More generally, Lipson tells the depressing story of the gradual erosion of public belief in the sanctity of private property rights when faced with social policies designed to promote the general - usually nationalist - goal. In an international context, this declining legitimacy has been abetted by the explosion of economic nationalism following decolonization and the formation of numerous Third World nation-states, who now have a democratic forum in the United Nations to assert their rights of national sovereignty against the purported international property rights which underpinned the nineteenth-century economic order.

As Lipson demonstrates, the *Pax Britannica* established a strict set of legal rules to protect foreign investment, through a number of commercial treaties between European states:

Foreigners were deemed subject to local laws, as they had been since the Middle Ages, but national jurisdiction over aliens and their property had to comply with a variety of international standards. Interference with foreigners' property was permissible, but only in exceptional cases involving a clear and limited public purpose. Both independent judicial review and full compensation had to be provided. Without these procedural and substantive remedies, any taking was an illegal confiscation and an international tort. In such cases, the investors' home state could choose whether or not to pursue the claims of its nationals once local remedies had been exhausted.

These rules extended norms of conduct based on European capitalist individualism to the rest of the Third World, often through the extension of colonial power, but in such cases as Latin America also through the local institutions of independent states. Nevertheless even in the nineteenth century, when the international order imposed by Europeans "assured the juridical dominance of individual possessions on a worldwide basis" those standing guard over foreign capital were faced by difficult policy choices. There were two periods of booming portfolio lending (mainly in government bonds to Latin America): one in the 1820s was followed by swift defaults, another in 1860 was followed by spectacular defaults in the 1890s. These posed serious questions for British policy-makers about the need for intervention. Their attitude, which today's guardians of foreign capital seem to have eschewed, is best summed up in Palmerston's famous 1848 circular, cited by Lipson: "The British Government has considered that the losses of imprudent men who have placed mistaken confidence in the good faith of foreign governments would prove a salutary warning to others."

Lipson goes on:

The Foreign Office was defining the risks the state would bear for foreign investors, and it was defining them narrowly. This definition not only conformed to laissez-faire principles, it also recognised some important long-term consequences of state intervention in the bond market. By extricating the owners of defaulted securities, Her Majesty's government would only be encouraging still more imprudent investments in the future.

The legitimacy of the nineteenth-century rules was not challenged until the Soviet and Mexican revolutions, and the explicit introduction of nationalisation policies by Atatürk's Turkey as a means of national economic development. The

inter-war period also saw the first major expropriation of direct foreign investment. Despite further intellectual assaults on them after 1945, Lipson argues that the establishment of *Pax Americana* meant a restoration (albeit in somewhat modified form) of the traditional rules. "This reconstituted regime", he writes, "remained strong until the late 1960s. Over the past decade the regime has been bifurcated. Portfolio loans have remained relatively secure while direct investments have been expropriated in increasing numbers without negative sanctions."

Lipson's explanation of this change in the fortunes of direct investment, which are increasingly divergent from those of portfolio investment, is what gives this book its originality. He argues, I think correctly, that the change is not to be explained by the gradual erosion of the perceived legitimacy of traditional investor rights, as this erosion has been progressing linearly. However, "the actual treatment of foreign capital... has not always paralleled this change in values... In spite of... cyclical variation, however, the long term trend is unmistakable. Investment security, enforceable if need be, has given way to varied national treatment."

Expropriation of direct investments increased in the late 1960s, according to Lipson, because of, first, increasing competition between multinationals, which made it increasingly difficult for investors to maintain a common front. Second, most governments of developing countries, keen to follow dirigiste policies (irrespective of their ideologies) and to assert their national sovereignty, have sought to regulate, tax or nationalize particular foreign investments on grounds of social utility, rather than out of any geo-economic antagonism towards private property as such. This has meant that expropriation can no longer be identified with socialism or communism by United States policy-makers and businessmen, as the nationalization of foreign oil companies in the late 1960s and early 70s by right-wing regimes in the Middle East proved. Third, confronted with piecemeal expropriations, multinationals have changed their strategy, partly by diversifying their investments across a number of countries, and partly by shifting from "vulnerable wholly owned facilities to more secure joint ventures, licensing agreements and management contracts".

As the increasing difficulty of organizing and maintaining the efficacy of international sanctions against transgressions, lead Lipson to the gloomy conclusion that there is little hope of "resurrecting the old standards". But this view may be too gloomy, just as his view of the relative security of portfolio lending may be too sanguine. One of the more important outcomes of the economic development of many Third World countries has been the emergence of Third World multinationals, in construction and a number of manufacturing industries. There has been a growth too in the financial power of some Opec countries, who are important portfolio lenders on world capital markets. Until the 1960s, the history of the protection of foreign capital could be written (as Lipson writes it) in terms of the divergent interests of capital-exporting countries keen to protect international property rights, and of capital-importing countries keen to circumscribe these

As a result, the type of industry in which multinational enterprises in the Third World are to be found has also changed. First to go were public utilities, which can readily be taken over by the host country. Resource-based industries have also become vulnerable as Third World countries have acquired the engineering and management skills to run them themselves. The same fate would now seem to await direct investment in most manufacturing industry, so that multinationals are more likely to be found in high-technology, knowledge-intensive industries which governments realize they may not be able to find the skills to run locally.

Portfolio lending has not suffered from the same threats of expropriation because of

two basic differences between the network of international lending and that of equity investments. The first is that multinational corporations have largely independent interests in expropriation disputes; financial institutions have joint interests... The lenders are interconnected and mutually dependent, even if they are numerous. Rescheduling one loan inevitably affects the repayment of others. Moreover, many of the loans are underwritten jointly. This mutual dependence among financial institutions is significant because it is continually rewritten on an international scale... Because they are reciprocally vulnerable, there are strong deterrents to beggar-my-neighbour policies. Among direct investments, only the tightest oligopolies have that kind of reciprocal vulnerability.

The divided interests of direct investors, as well as the increasing difficulty of organizing and maintaining the efficacy of international sanctions against transgressions, lead Lipson to the gloomy conclusion that there is little hope of "resurrecting the old standards". But this view may be too gloomy, just as his view of the relative security of portfolio lending may be too sanguine. One of the more important outcomes of the economic development of many Third World countries has been the emergence of Third World multinationals, in construction and a number of manufacturing industries. There has been a growth too in the financial power of some Opec countries, who are important portfolio lenders on world capital markets. Until the 1960s, the history of the protection of foreign capital could be written (as Lipson writes it) in terms of the divergent interests of capital-exporting countries keen to protect international property rights, and of capital-importing countries keen to circumscribe these

rights. This dichotomy is less likely in the future. With the United States becoming a capital-importer for the foreseeable future as a result of its budget deficit, the interests of developing and developed countries may converge and lead to an increasing acceptance of the traditional rules protecting international property.

By contrast, the future of portfolio lending - particularly of its modern variant, syndicated bank credits - to developing countries is more doubtful. If the historical experience of boom-bust cycles in portfolio lending, outlined by Lipson, is anything to go by, it takes roughly a generation for voluntary lending to resume after a major bust. It is uncertain whether the current debt crisis, with its large-scale rescheduling of repayments, represents a conventional "bust phase", or whether through various co-operative efforts these debts will be salvaged.

There are two trends which do not augur well for the future of portfolio lending - particularly of the syndicated banking variety - to the Third World. The first is the growing importance of securities (similar to nineteenth-century bonds) which can be traded instantaneously in a global market, as the major instruments for such lending. These are the attempts made by consortia of banks, their parent governments and multilateral agencies, to ensure that the indebted Third World economies are run in a manner conducive to servicing their debt. Many of the resulting domestic reforms may be desirable in themselves, and may correct inefficiencies and distortions in the economies in question; they are likely all the same to be resented, for the same reasons of economic nationalism. Lipson fails to recognize the importance of the fear of foreign investment felt in developing countries, whose rulers may see it as an attempt to subvert or weaken, through direct or indirect pressure, their hold over their populace. Since the 1960s many developing countries have probably recognized that multinationals are paper tigers, but the much more successful pressure that portfolio lenders can now exert on them (for the reasons cited by Lipson) is likely to make them fear such capital flows in the future. The forbearance shown by Britain in the nineteenth century may therefore be important as a model if developing countries are to be integrated fully into the emerging global capital market.

Missed opportunities

Jan Rostowski

JOHN M. STEVENS
Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads: The economic dilemmas of communism in postwar Czechoslovakia
 349pp. Boulder: East European Monographs; distributed by Columbia University Press.
 £23.40.
 0 88333 079 1

The post-war history of Czechoslovakia is one of missed opportunities, both economic and political, according to John M. Stevens. First there was the failure of the political experiment to establish a democratic regime on the Western model which would nevertheless be friendly to the Soviet Union - an experiment which failed in 1948 just before elections in which the Communists were expected to lose ground. Together with democracy, the mixed economic system (very close in nature to the Soviet New Economic Policy of the 1920s) was also swept away, and the country embarked on a period of Socialist forced industrialization. Then in 1968 there was the Soviet-led invasion which reversed the democratization introduced during the Prague Spring and the market socialist reforms which accompanied it. In the 1970s there was a failure to open up the economy to trade with the West which, had it been pursued cautiously, would have made it possible to bring the technological level of Czechoslovak industry closer to Western standards, without falling into the debt trap that has afflicted Poland (East Germany is an example of the successful pursuit of just such a strategy).

However, what falls to emerge clearly from

Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads is why these opportunities were missed. The immediate causes are well known and are clearly described by John Stevens, but what is lacking is a more profound analysis. Why has Czechoslovakia, which was undoubtedly the most advanced of all the East European countries in 1950, with a national income as high as that of West Germany and much higher than that of Austria, and a tradition of true democracy throughout the inter-war period, been ruled almost continuously since 1948 by the most hard-line regime in the Soviet bloc? Why is it that whereas the rulers of Hungary and Poland have reacted to popular unrest by the introduction of more or less far-reaching economic reforms and a quite extensive latitude in what is permissible in political and economic discussion, the very word "reform" is banned in Czechoslovakia? How did it come about that whereas the economic gap between the backward countries of Eastern Europe and the West shrank during the post-war period - at least until the mid-1970s - the gap between highly developed Czechoslovakia and the West grew?

The last question should be of particular interest to British readers. Like Britain, Czechoslovakia survived the Second World War with its industry almost intact, and, like Britain, it decided to go for the soft option and protect itself from international competition. In the British case this led to the strengthening of trading links with the Commonwealth in the immediate post-war period and a failure to join the European Community until 1973. Czechoslovakia similarly shifted its trade, which had been overwhelmingly with the advanced countries of the West, towards the East. The argument was that with its advanced industry, the

Czechoslovak economy was highly complementary to those of the other Socialist countries which had the raw materials it needed. The results have been very grave for Czechoslovakia. The lack of competition has meant that Czech industry has been less and less capable of selling on world markets, so that it now sells only 15 per cent of its exports to the West, less than any other Eastern bloc country. Even more serious, the lack of competition on both foreign and domestic markets has resulted in extremely high energy and raw material consumption in Czechoslovak industry. Moreover, being poor in raw materials, Czechoslovakia has found itself more and more dependent on imports from its Eastern neighbours. A vicious circle operates: because of the guaranteed trade with the East there is little understanding among the leadership of the need for domestic economic reform to improve efficiency, while the resulting uncompetitiveness of Czech industrial products leads to the (well-founded) belief that trade with the West cannot be expanded.

The most fascinating question of all is why Communism has done comparatively badly in economic terms in the most advanced country in which it was introduced after the Second World War. It is a pity that Dr Stevens's competent and detailed account of Czechoslovakia's post-war economic history devotes comparatively little time to wider questions of this sort. Where it does there is a tendency to avoid coming to any clear conclusion; indeed, an excessive zeal for "balance" mars many parts of the work. The most surprising thing about the book is its title, since it is clear from Dr Stevens's own narrative that Czechoslovakia left the crossroads behind long ago, and has hardly ever looked back.

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Mates and inmates

Laurie Taylor

JAMES CAMPBELL
Gate Fever: Voices from a prison
179pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0297 788566

Among the less well-chronicled pains of imprisonment must be the periodic need to make oneself available for research. Inmates, desperately trying to carve some small area of privacy from the overcrowded terrain of the typical English jail, can hardly be overjoyed at the sight of another eager graduate hearing tape-recorder and questionnaires. It is true that prisoners may not exactly be compelled to take part in such investigations, but it is still difficult to describe those who do as "volunteers". As long as parole exists, and the reasons for it being granted remain obscure, there is always the lurking possibility that participation may "do a bit of good", that refusal may be counted as evidence of "uncooperativeness".

James Campbell might be said to have had even less excuse for troubling the residents of Lewes Prison than some of his nosy predecessors. His detailed look at C Wing is critical enough about contemporary prison life (how could it be otherwise?) but it carries no redeeming recommendations for change, no prescriptions for improvement. It is a purely literary exercise. "What follows has no aspiration to be regarded as sociology or criminology, but as a writer's report on the life of a single prison, constructed from notes, tape-recordings and memory."

At least, though, Campbell did not track down his subjects with the relentlessness of a traditional researcher in pursuit of a selected sample. He simply sat in his small cell in the wing and waited. "To the front of my door I tacked a notice (are tacks allowed?) - it's a sort of question you begin asking yourself) giving my name and my reasons for being in the prison, and inviting anyone, prisoner or prison officer, who felt like doing so to come and talk." He served four months in his cramped quarters, five days a week, often from 9 o'clock in the morning until the lock-up at 8.30pm. It was not pleasant to stay later. "The disappearance of the prisoners from the floor of the prison never ceased to affect me: it was like the sudden disintegration of flesh from the skeleton."

Much of the book is devoted to the relationships he established with various prisoners: Simon, who expertly painted Flemish landscapes, French still-lives, flower arrangements, and pencil portraits ("Screws have bought my paintings", he boasted); T.C., who obsessively studied maps of the area in which his present prison was situated - familiarizing himself "with a landscape he would never see"; Stuart, the grass, who charged Campbell with being a dilettante, a wishy-washy liberal, and of wanting to "write a cosy little book".

Stuart was wrong. There is nothing at all cosy about this portrait. Campbell bravely pursues his interests even if they conflict with those of prison officers, and equally fearlessly

records the actual nature of inmate life in the cell, from the broad details of the furnishings down to the secret location of the tiniest pellet of hash. And he is anything but wishy-washy in his readiness to confront the human anxieties and concerns of any prisoner: "I always recognised him as a man first and an outlaw second." But he is not always patient: "A senior member of staff had advised me that the hores and liars would come first, and he was right. Bored, liars and worse, hard to get rid of and tightening the claustrophobia in the tiny room."

At points like this it becomes difficult to feel was his decision to put up the invitation and wait for the arrival of good copy. He had little right to feel aggrieved at the unreadiness of all the inmates to measure up to his literary hopes. At least those prisoners who did find favour with him were adopted with comparable enthusiasm. There was the black man with the chiselled and handsome face of an aristocratic Englishman: "I liked this man a lot and looked forward to our meetings. He was one of a few prisoners I would have become friends with had we met in other circumstances." Overall, though, his parade of likes and dislikes does arouse the nagging feeling that such extreme fastidiousness requires some warrant: it can never be licensed by the mere fact that those of whom Campbell writes have, often by no more than the twin accidents of social class and police apprehension, found themselves spending some part of their lives as prisoners.

This slight hint of patronage, this whiff of condescension, clears when Campbell turns to less human aspects of the prison. Although his chapter on the prison workshop lacks some of the ironies to be found in Rod Caid's excellent account of factory life at Coldingley Prison (*A Good and Useful Life*) it nicely captures the paradox of prison "industry". "The machines do all the work. They are massive compound affairs, constantly hissing and grinding and chuntering. The workshop teams with the ooze and smell of industry, but that is a meagre disguise for the lethargy it creates and contains."

Other familiar pastimes and objects become distorted by prison life, are rendered surreal by a subtle change in their function, their shape, their density. Campbell, on a visit to the punishment block, admirably catches the consequences of such material dislocation for the prisoners:

Benny . . . pointed to the chair and sat himself on the edge of the bed. In the block the tables and chairs are made from thick, corrugated cardboard interlocking pieces. The chair doesn't feel like a real chair. The table looks like an upturned box. Officially, strategically, this is to prevent them being used as weapons or barricades . . . But it also contributes to the solitary prisoner's sense of disorientation, of imbalance, to the distortion of the perceptible world. Deprived already of a proper sense of time, he is also disoriented by the certainty of the things he touches, sits upon, writes, reads and eats at, being what they appear to be.

Acute observation and analysis such as this make one wish that James Campbell was more ready elsewhere in the book to lower his interpersonal sensibilities by those few inches which would allow the reader to get a slightly better fix on the material prison world which lies beyond them.

Brutish way of life

Ian Jack

HANIF KUREISHI
My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign
111pp. Faber. Paperback, £3.95.
0571 139817

Neither the white nor the brown race emerges with much credit from *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a film fulsomely praised when it was released last year. The whites in the film are mainly racist youths with skin the colour of uccooked pastry, weighed down by big hoots and their own stupidity. The Pakistanis are altogether lighter people, sharper, quicker on their feet. They make money and jokes, they have the best lines. One keeps a traditional Muslim wife at home and has it away with a white mistress in the office. Another imports heroin. "In this damn country which we hate and love, you can get anything you want", says the first. "It's all spread out and available. That's why I believe in England. You just have to know how to squeeze the tits of the system."

I suspect - sheer conjecture; no evidence - that this racial portrayal partly explains the film's success with British audiences. Here at last is a story about immigrants which shows them neither as victims nor tradition-bound aliens. They're comprehensible, modern people with an eye to the main chance, no better or worse than the rest of us. True, we, the white British, don't come off so well; but then the British in the film are skinheads, aren't they, and therefore have little to do with us. We identify instead with the two boy heroes, one white, one brown, who become lovers and open their beautiful laundrette despite the opposition of the white yobs and the brown cynics. The last frame has them splashing each other with water over a sink, delightfully individual individuals who, through love, have made a nonsense of racial antipathy.

Subtract the fashionable elements of homosexuality, heroin-smuggling, violence and fantasy, and *My Beautiful Laundrette*

could be an updated version of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. There is nothing wrong with that, perhaps, but it is not the message Hanif Kureishi is concerned to put across in his thirty-page essay, "The Rainbow Sign", which accompanies his film script in this small paperback. Perhaps we have misread the film. Kureishi's essay entirely lacks the comforting (some might say complacent) humanism which flows from the film's ending.

The essay is autobiographical and finely told. Kureishi, the son of a well-to-do Pakistani father and English mother, grew up in the London suburbs longing to be white and fearful of the work "Paki". Then Powellism came and changed him. He tore down his posters of the Beatles and put the Black Panthers on his bedroom wall. He became cold and distant and began to feel "very violent", though he could never accept the black militant view that white meant evil; his mother, after all, was that. Later he visited Pakistan under its military régime, grew impatient with the illiberalism and lack of opportunity he found there, and came "home" to a country with which he has never wanted to identify himself.

The white British take a great deal of punishment: Kureishi attacks them for their ignorance, their complacency and their inability to conduct a reasoned argument. Orwell's notion that "decency" is an eternal strain in English society may be no more than "blind social patriotism . . . vanity . . . self-congratulation". It crumbled with the Paki-bashers, went up in flames with Asian homes in east London.

He has a solution. The white British must make the adjustment and find a new and broader way of defining themselves, otherwise Britain faces "insularity, schism, bitterness and catastrophe". He is probably right, though whether the adjustment can be achieved through making the whites feel guilty is more questionable; poor British whites already feel put-upon and have made more "adjustment" to the bewildering changes in their economic and social life over the past twenty years than any other social class in western Europe. The answer may yet lie in the quieter humanist voice of *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

Mysterious decisions

Paul Smith

ASA BRIGGS and JOANNA SPICER
The Franchise Affair: Creating fortunes and failures in independent television
226pp. Century. £14.95.
07126 12017

The vast and (mostly) profitable territorial fields of independent television have something in common with those of the Middle Ages, not least in their liability to allocation and revocation at the arbitrary dictate of a more or less well-informed public authority. Reading the account that Asa Briggs and Joanna Spicer give of how the Independent Broadcasting Authority made its 1980 allotment of television franchises, one feels that the IBA operated with a touch of the mystique of kingship. The authors refer to "the sense of oracles, of sacrificial victims, even a female deity, Lady Plowden, the Chairman of the Authority". But it is hard to discover what criteria, what knowledge, and what process of evaluation and judgment set the dispatch riders on their way.

The worst suspicion thrown up by this book is that much of the competition was fake. Within a formally regional framework, the Authority had to look to the needs of a viable national system. That made it heavily reliant on the continued vigour of the major contractors who dominated the key networking arrangements which they themselves, and not the Authority, had brought into being. It was hardly conceivable that Granada or London Weekend should fall. At the other and less profitable end of the

spectrum, Border, Channel and Grampian found no competitors. The number of regions where displacement of the company in possession could readily be contemplated was thus limited, and the temptation to make a gesture in those areas correspondingly strong: the compulsion on a body entrusted with powers of summary execution to exhibit its will to use them must have been powerful.

Briggs and Spicer tell us something about the procedures employed and their shortcomings. The Authority's attempt at gauging public opinion was near-fatuous: its public meetings predictably attracted very unrepresentative audiences (perhaps the only way of surmounting this problem would have been to black out local transmissions for the evening). At the summit of the assessment process stood, in theory, the interviews with the applicants, but these lasted only eighty minutes and frequently left the applicants unsure whether any real significance had attached to them. "Had the Chairman, if not the Members, already made up her mind? Just what was predetermined? How much was facade?" Unfortunately, the authors are in no position to answer their own questions. They do not seem to have had access to the transcripts of the interviews.

More important, they can produce virtually no first-hand evidence on the Authority's internal deliberations. In operations of this kind, the responsible body tends to summon up a mass of information, some of it wrong, much of it tendentious, nearly all of it hard to interpret, which it then finds it has neither the staff nor the systems to evaluate. Did the IBA do better in this respect than, say, the University Grants Committee of the same era, embarking on the

first round of cuts in the universities? A verdict on its operating efficiency depends on knowing just how the applications were processed by its staff as well as what considerations governed its members' discussions, but Briggs and Spicer have questioned neither staff nor members - probably because neither would have told them anything. The decisions remain unexplained. Westward's boardroom hawling may have made its dismissal natural, but there is still no light on the ejection of Southern, whose outraged chairman complained that the Authority "had performed an act of arbitrary power based on a secret process of assessment, exercised without opportunity for defence, questioning or appeal, and we believe it had already decided that there had to be at least one supreme sacrifice regardless of whom the replacement was to be".

That was a little naive. The Authority was bound to work in an arbitrary and secretive way because practically applicable criteria for distinguishing between its suitors could hardly be devised. Who was to say, and by what method of assessment, whether Thames's programming intentions were more "ambitious, comprehensive, eclectic, and above all responsive" (to use its own phraseology) than those of its rivals? How to balance the offer of *Teach Yourself Cornish* and six thirty-minute programmes on flower-arranging (*Television South-West*) against anything else? Without an intricate process of sifting and weighing and cross-questioning, probably impossible with the time and human resources available, judgment inevitably shaded into guesswork. In at least one case, that of the only national franchise on offer, the breakfast-time contract, there

were soon grounds for arguing that the guess had been wildly wrong and that the unreality of the IBA's controls was being exposed, as the Authority felt obliged to acquiesce in a series of retreats from its favourite's original intentions in order to stave off financial collapse.

The judgments or guesses had to be made because it was essential to maintain the appearance of rational public control, just as it was essential to keep up the impression of a regional system genuinely responsive to local wishes in face of the countervailing forces of the networking arrangements, the technical impossibility of making transmission areas conform to social and cultural boundaries, and the extreme difficulty of diffusing shareholding and profits among the local public (for all that Merseyvision proposed share sales "over pub counters").

Next time round, as cable and satellite erode the degree of public control and of regional difference, and the BBC, perhaps, cuts into the advertising revenue which supports the independent system, the IBA's task will be even harder. Briggs and Spicer, however, refuse to opt for the "free publishing" approach or, as some of their readers might be tempted to do, for a well-run raffle. They prefer to stick to the concept of public broadcasting, keeping a place for "unifying" broadcasting appealing to national, regional and local audiences and taking into account both cultural identity and programme balance. Something like the IBA will continue to be needed. Whether it can improve on impressionistic decision-making and arbitrary methods of control remains to be seen.

Unanswered questions

Nicola Shulman

ENANG
Watching Dallas: Soap opera and the melodramatic imagination
166pp. Methuen. £10.50 (paperback, £3.95).
0416 416306

"As the fight for Dallas continues between the television stations many viewers feel that the absence of this soap opera has created a gap in their lives. With no date for Dallas' return, viewers and aficionados will instead be able to read a timely book." So runs the press release accompanying Ian Ang's book. *Dallas* has now returned, but in any case, it would surely be clear to the aficionado that there is a difference between a popular television serial and a 156-page book containing textual analysis of forty-two letters written by Dutch people, taking as its central theme the relation between pleasure and ideology and having frequent recourse to the works of Roland Barthes and Pierre Bourdieu. Not only are there no pictures and no conversations (and this alone might make one suspect that it was not the real thing), but there are no telephones and no funny hats.

There is more to this, though, than meets the eye: if, to the lay viewer, *Watching Dallas* is not much like watching *Dallas*, this is because he has not (as the author points out) read soap opera as "text". Consequently he thinks it is about (elephantines; funny hats; power, money, love and fabulous knitwear with leather trimmings. Ms Ang, on the other hand, who has read it as "text", maintains that its primary function is to adhere to the principles of "the so-called hermeneutic code". This, she explains, "consists of all those elements in a narrative which pose a problem or effect a delay in the solution of a problem: obstacles, errors, devious behaviour, deceptions, half-truths and so on". Once the reader has taken this in, he will instantly recognize that the publishers are right: watching *Dallas* and *Watching Dallas* could scarcely be more alike.

For over Ms Ang's book the "hermeneutic code" also presides: problems, errors, obstructions in the flow of argument, they are all here, but it is in the field of effecting delay that Ang comes into her own. Early in the book she asks herself the question, "Why do people watch *Dallas*?" Clearly because they find it enjoyable. What then are the determining actors of

this enjoyment, this pleasure?" A few pages later, here she is again: "We have indeed set ourselves the task, if not to solve the riddle of the pleasure of *Dallas*, then at least to unravel it to some degree." Let us to it, then! Before too long we have reached the conclusion that "What is told in the narrative must also play a part in the production of pleasure", and appear to be making progress, but almost immediately we are back in the realms of darkness and unknowing: "whatever there is to be said about the pleasure of *Dallas*", fatters Ms Ang, groping, "the field of tension between the fictional and the real seems to play an important part in it". A masterful display of protraction, you may think. But this is nothing. She manages to spin the book out half its length before addressing the subject of "Dallas as prime time Soap opera".

How does she do it? She is not above workaday contrivances such as repetition and digression, but her preferred method is to hurl into her own path so obviously unhelpful question, grapple it to the ground over several pages and finally throw it out. For instance: "But is it really possible to isolate pleasure in *Dallas* from pleasure in television in general? Could it not be said that pleasure in *Dallas* is connected not so much with the specific characteristics of the programme itself as with pleasure in television in general?" This is a fairly ally question, and it is also one to which, as the reader knows, the answer will be "no". None the less the battle is grim for many pages. All hands are on deck: university professors, programme controllers, innocent Dutch letter-writers, and at last Ms Ang emerges, triumphant, from the fray. Not it is not so. People watch *Dallas* because they like it better than the programme on the other channel! But why do they like it better than the other programme? And so we are off again.

False starts and contrived opposition are perfectly legitimate ways of constructing an argument, and were Ian Ang to display, in her conclusions, anything like the imagination she has put into her method, but those conclusions are resoundingly limp: "Fiction and fantasy", "Dallas and Feminism", "function by making life in the present pleasurable, or at least livable, but this does not by any means exclude radical political activity or consciousness (in real life)". Might we not have got here by a shorter route?

Cultural transformations

Roger Silverstone

JOSHUA MEYROWITZ
No Sense of Place: The impact of electronic media on social behaviour
416pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.
019 5034740

Joshua Meyrowitz's thesis in *No Sense of Place* can be simply stated. Television, not uniquely but pre-eminently, has transformed our social and cultural environment. It has transformed the relationship between the public and the private; and between physical and social space; it has profoundly affected the normally clear boundaries which separate the sexes, the generations, the powerful from the powerless; it has made the world visible and accessible in dramatically new ways. It has profoundly affected the character of our print-based culture. The changes that television has wrought continue; they have a dynamic of their own, returning us to a form of social and cultural experience which Meyrowitz claims is akin to that of hunters and gatherers - politically egalitarian, discriminating little between play and work, living more and more of our lives in public, hunting and gathering information rather than food.

The thesis is a hybrid: its progenitors are Marshall McLuhan's technological determinism - plausible yet inadequate - and Erving Goffman's sociology of everyday life, which takes literally the metaphor of the world as a stage. Meyrowitz believes that together they form a theory capable of linking television and life, of identifying the way in which television influences our culture. His claims are a perverse mixture of the extravagant and the qualified. There is no possible experiment which can isolate the medium as a single variable. There is no virtue, he believes, in persisting with a "hypodermic" model of television's influence, as if a passive audience is injected with thoughts and feelings. Television, he asserts, is information; information is an environment; our relationships to each other, real or imagined, are the product of the amount, quality and range of the information we have at our disposal. Quantity turns into quality, formality into informality, disconnection into connection, the strange into the familiar. To members of a viewing culture observing the private worlds of others - of parents, leaders, members of the opposite sex - the world becomes increasingly

shared. Awe and difference are erased.

This is familiar stuff. The addition of a Goffmanesque sociology adds little to Meyrowitz's sweeping generalizations about the effects of technology, and the refinement of a sociology of space - both of the micro-space of the family as context, and of the macro-space of society as content - adds no more than a gloss to a thesis which quickly outruns its own insights and ceases to be plausible. No respecter of boundaries himself, Meyrowitz's evidence is in turn scholarly and impressionistic; his argument academic and journalistic. He has a number of interesting things to say, but his argument does not hold.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, Meyrowitz decontextualizes television, both in relation to other media, and even more crucially in relation to the distinct cultures, the political and familial environments, in which its messages are produced and received. Not only do different societies work with the medium in different ways, but different families do, too. Of course there is much that is shared - television news is a kind of global gossip as much as our daily gossip is a kind of news - but the really important questions about the impact of television are those which take account of those differences, as well as of the similarities. Second, Meyrowitz has very little to say about the messages television conveys, or about the particular mechanisms of narrative and format which may provide one route into an understanding of its pervasiveness and penetration. Third, he is not sensitive enough to the contradictions of seeing and feeling, activity and passivity, which mark a viewer's relationship to what is seen and heard on television. Fourth, he generalizes too quickly from the supposed American experience, mistaking it for the rule. He does not see the profound strains towards the defensive privatization of family life which are encouraged by the media, no doubt - and perhaps increasingly in a "narrow" castingsage of cable, video, and Walkman - but not exclusively so.

In short, Meyrowitz offers a theory of culture without considering issues of power and ideology; a model of society without an understanding of structural constraints on behaviour and action; a view of technological induced change that does not recognize indeterminacy; and a perception of the viewer that does not acknowledge our capacity to resist the influences of the medium which so persistently penetrates our world.

Visions of Faith

an anthology of reflections

Marshall Pickering

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MARSHALL PICKERING, 3 Begonia Lane, Basildon, Essex S25 7LP

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Many writers have suffered from what might be termed a Proustian syndrome, where cutting and shaping and revision have supplanted, or have become, the objective. Harold Brodkey, whose supporters believe that he is writing the great American novel, has been at the warp and woof those many years, and does not seem to be able to sign off, like the Persian weavers of old, with that knot of imperfection and incompleteness which signifies surrender to judgment. Nevertheless, the question which is beginning to grip literary New York is this: will Brodkey unmask? For at least thirty years he has been at work on a grand novelistic enterprise—the word *Bildungsroman* is freely whispered—and has been issuing fragments of it in a manner which might be described as flirtatious or as furtive according to taste. Those who have reviewed the excerpts (or harbingers) are much divided. Donita Donoghue compares them to Proust, while Dennis Enright tended to the unclad emperor interpretation; in the process drawing a twenty-four-page single-spaced letter from Brodkey, which nobody would publish and which he offers free of charge to anybody writing to his home address.

Now it seems that after long travail, he will be able to judge for ourselves. The novel, which may or may not be entitled *A Party of Animals*, is hovering on a publisher's threshold, summoning up the nerve to knock for admittance.

By dint of much fiddling, I have managed to read most of the morsels with which Brodkey has teased the palate. His only commercially published effort, a sequence of stories called *First Love and Other Sorrows*, has just been reissued after twenty-seven years by Vintage Books. Another collection, *Women and Angels*, was released last year on a subscription-only basis to members of the Jewish Publication Society, and was generally ignored by the review pages, dominated as they are by the

big houses. Other teasing fragments have been more accessible in the *New Yorker*, *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*. I also found, in a 1973 number of the defunct *American Review*, a short story called "Innocence". This has been described rather archly by Donita Donoghue as "X-rated"; it is in fact the longest, the most exhaustive and the least erotic description of an attempt to arouse a woman to orgasm that I have ever read.

Everything Brodkey has published is a part of his work in progress. What do we know for sure about the shape of the novel? It appears to consist of the sacred and the profane recollections of Wiloy Silonowicz, a clever, awkward boy groping to manhood. His early years, when he is burdened by being too bright, are evoked in *First Love and Other Sorrows*. In *Women and Angels* he describes the apparition of a Soraph to Harvard Yard. In "Innocence" he strives like a Trojan to make Orra Perkins come. Common to all episodes is some reference to Wiloy's orphanhood and some discussion of his Jewishness, or, perhaps better say, of his relation to Judaism.

Somo Jewish critics have objected to Brodkey's use of stereotype in his depiction of the mother-son relationship. Actually, the protracted description of the death of Wiloy's stepmother in *Women and Angels* (the story is called "Lila") is extremely affecting and well wrought. Like much of what Brodkey writes, it is intensely physical, and climaxes with the boy trying to imagine his own body as female, the better to empathize with the victim of a terrifying cancer:

She said, "Look what they've done to me. My God, look what they've done to me." She lowered her nightgown to her waist. The eerie colours of her carapace and the jumble of scars moved into my consciousness like something in a movie advancing towards the camera, filling and overspreading the screen. That gargoylish torso.

Brodkey's other descriptions of bodily existence are similarly unparaphrased and very seldom

allotivated by any sort of humour. One has the impression that Jewish wit is considered frivolous or worse by him. The prose of "The Angel" affords the boldest possible contrast to the candid, sometimes rather cynical, descriptions of human frailty that one encounters in Brodkey's remaining oeuvre. The sentences are almost unquotably long; the atmosphere mystical; the implications apocalyptic.

Today the Angel of Silence and of Inspiration (toward Truth) appeared to a number of us passing by on the walk in front of Harvard Hall—this was a little after three o'clock—today is October twenty-fifth, nineteen-hundred-and-fifty-one.

There's a temptation to laugh here, but it's quickly succeeded by the effort of concentration required to apprehend the vision. You can read the whole story without being clear as to whether or not the vision actually spoke:

I was Christlike enough to expect to see further figures, many with trumpets and swords, rising in spirals upward or arranged in tiers ascending toward the soon-to-be-revealed Ultimate Radiance, God the Father, and I felt this, I confess, as a Jewish defeat—but since I thought it was, indeed, The End of the World, that querulous home team rooting alienated itself in expectation of justice, logic, orderliness of a divine sort at last.

Donoghue's Proustian comparison has more to do with the scale of the effort than with the style. I'm struck, reviewing the critics, by the fact that Brodkey is never compared, as a writer, to any other writer. (Harold Bloom has called him the heir of Whitman, but that is plainly not a stylistic reference.)

A Party of Animals may fall from the press in a series of volumes. There must be an element of hype in this long, veil-lifting arousal of expectations, but this is, after all, America and there is no reason to doubt that Brodkey is still besitating between two opening sentences. The choice apparently lies between a description of the moment of his birth, or the words, "Imagine a mind shaped like a person." As soon as someone compares him with Flaubert, he'll be ready.

Posthumous work by Ernest Hemingway is available in profusion, and runs to nine volumes thus far. But only one of those, *Islands in the Stream*, is a work of fiction. Next month, Hemingway's last novel, *The Garden of Eden*, will be published by Scribner's. That is to say that a version of it will be published,

because the manuscript was 1,500 pages and the edited or abridged package is 247 pages long.

The usual disputes will attend publication. Hemingway did write that he wanted all his incomplete manuscripts to be put to the torch, and there are those who reverence such instructions. (An interesting essay might be written on the number of authors who have, and have not, made this stipulation.) Then again, why not publish the lot? Tom Jenks of Scribner, who did the editing, says that he has only cut and re-arranged, not re-written. Still, he's in a weak position to know what Papa's wishes would have been. These are the standard points made on these occasions. More interesting is the theme of the work itself, which appears to answer long-debated questions about Hemingway's sexuality. The recurrent theme of the book is provided by a couple much given to adultery and cross-dressing. There were hints of this in the memoirs of Mary, Hemingway's fourth wife and widow, but the novel appears, as it were, to flesh them out.

The Garden of Eden was begun in Cuba. It takes the *oficio* through some favourite African and Spanish terrain, and lays on the butting (though one of the leading characters denounces the shooting of elephants). But the main attention will obviously be caught by the characters, David and Catherine Bourne, who cut and dye their hair to match, who try on all kinds of role reversals, and who experiment with a *ménage à trois*. We may never see what was cut, but clearly what remains has been perfectly timed to be very new.

* * *

I often wondered how Frida Kahlo's self-portrait, dedicated to Leon Trotsky, ever found its way into the collection of Clare Booth Luce. But I had an unmissable opportunity to ask the doyenne of conservative womanhood when she gave a party for young Christopher Buckley's first novel, *The White House Mess*, the other night. It seems that one day in 1940, Mrs Luce was visiting the Kahlo atelier in Mexico City and found the portrait, with its dedication, newly finished. "At that moment," she said, "the telephone rang and Frida answered it. The news was that Trotsky had just been murdered on the orders of Lenin [sic]. She was so upset that she said she would destroy the picture—now meaningless to her. I offered to rescue it and she let me take it away."

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Iain Bamforth's book of poems, *The Modern Copernicus*, was published in 1984.

Nigel Barley is Assistant Keeper for West Africa at the Museum of Mankind. His books include *The Invention of Anthropology*, 1983.

Brendan Bradshaw is a Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge, and author of *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century*, 1979.

John Cannon is Professor of Modern History at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. His *Archaeological Century: The passage of eighteenth-century England* was published in 1984.

Jeremy Carter is a lecturer in History at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London.

Terry Eagleton is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. His *William Shakespeare in Blackwell's Reconciling Literature* series has recently been published. His *Against the Grain: Essays 1965-1975* will be published next month.

John Foster is a Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at Brasenose College, Oxford. His books include *The Case for Idealism*, 1982, and *Ayer*, 1985; in the *Arguments of the Philosophers* series.

Victoria Ginzburg's *Vita: The life of V. Sackville-West* was published in 1983.

Christopher Harvie's books include *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish society and politics, 1707-1977*, 1977. Tim Ingold is a lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. His books include *Hunters, Pastoralists and Ranchers*, 1980.

Ian Jack was until recently the India correspondent of *The Sunday Times*.

Deepak Lal is Professor of Political Economy at University College London. His books include *Appraising Foreign Investment in Developing Countries*, 1975.

Peter Mandel is Professor of History at Princeton University.

Claudio Rawson's most recent book is *Order from Confusion: Studies in eighteenth century literature from Swift to Cowper*, 1985.

J. M. Richards is the editor of *Who's Who in Architecture: From 1400 to the present day*, 1977.

Jan Reinhardt is Senior Lecturer in Economics at the Kingston Polytechnic. He is preparing a book on the economics of socialist countries.

Joseph Rykwert is the author, with Anne Rykwert, of *The Brothers Adam: The men and the style*, 1985.

William Sacht's most recent book of poems is *Intelligence*, 1984.

Nicola Shalman's *Social Security* was published last year.

Roger Silverstein is the author of *The Message of Television: Myth and narrative in contemporary culture*, 1981.

Paul Smith is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.

Laurie Taylor is Professor of Sociology at the University of York. He is the editor, with Bob Mullen, of *Unsettled Ground: The politics of television and radio*, which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Eugene Weber is Joan Paley Professor of Modern European History at the University of California, Los Angeles. His books include *A Modern History of Europe: Men, cultures and societies from the Renaissance to the present*, 1975.

Marjorie D. Whelan is Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University.

Mr. X's most recent book is *Strategies of British India: Iron and Afghanistan 1798-1850*, 1980.

Letters

Robbins and After

Sir, John Fletcher (Letters, April 18) chides me for writing with the wisdom of hindsight. If only he had been told our system of higher education was too expensive, he would not have become a don. "Why won't you tell?" But he was told. Not with the clarity and authority of Professor Trow (*Universities Quarterly*, March 1964, and *Higher Education Review*, Summer 1969) because Government does not speak that way. But what was Trow's decision to charge overseas students higher fees than home students, or Shirley Williams's thirteen points, but an admission that we had to economize? Professor Fletcher says he did not hear my voice raised in the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. I don't know whether he was attending in those days, but I was the only member to give public support to Croftland (*Hansard*, January 1967); and when Sir Hugh Robson was chairman and I his deputy we tried in vain to sell one of the thirteen points to induce more students to live at home. Does he remember later my urging the Vice-Chancellors to stop allowing the number of overseas students to mount indefinitely?

Of course, I don't expect him to have heard my feeble plights, but in 1965 (*Hansard*, December 1) I first spoke of the need for rationalization. "We cannot afford to have every university teach and research in every subject it wishes"; and I suggested ways of reducing costs. In 1967 I said expansion was doomed if Britain continued to follow an East of Suez policy (*Hansard*, December 20). For years I had no success in persuading the Schools in the University of London to rationalize resources: committees on geology and classics simply proposed that more money should be spent. But in 1975, when the going got rougher, I got University College to agree to reduce establishments; and when I became Vice-Chancellor the Flowers and Swinerton-Dyer committee suggested how the medical and non-medical Schools could be rationalized. In 1978 I visited every sizeable institution to warn them that bad times were on the way.

But I do not want to exculpate myself. I missed a marvellous opportunity to catch Professor Fletcher's ear when I was asked to give the first Dimbleby Lecture on television. I was too laconic to defend the universities which were in 1972 being attacked as ivory towers full of revolting students. I brushed aside their cost and did not consider how affective they were, or were not, in crossing the country's wealth. The founding fathers of the new universities were Professor Fletcher were too American. We wanted them to do what Oxbridge and Redbrick were doing, only to do it better and less hampered by sclerotic curricula. Bernard Crick (Letters, April 25) is right to criticize us for not asking whether all students in humanities should show some proficiency in numeracy and that scientists learn a language. That would have meant approaching the American course system.

A fortnight ago I visited the University of Waterloo, Ontario. It was founded in 1957 as a technological university, and all students take a four-year sandwich course. Ninety per cent of them take at least one course in computing, and Canadian business snaps up these arts students because they are numerate and can also communicate. Waterloo has won more research contracts than any other university. The staff-student ratio is 1:23. Not much sympathy was expressed for the plight of British universities with their present ratios. I mention this because Professor Fletcher's letter saddened me. He seems to assume that if his dream has vanished others are to blame and the Robbins expansion was a mistake. Why not dream again? Why should all universities cover the spectrum? Why not ask local business what sort of graduates they need and whether they will help too to train them? Why not, if Ontario is too far, visit Aston and Salford?

Universities need help in effecting major reforms and I can meet Professor Fletcher on one point: if after all the agonies and form-filling in past years, the University Grants Committee does not give a clear lead and advice each university how to play its future, then it will be doubtful upon its own continued existence. If Professor Fletcher saddens me Professor Crick complements me. I expect a professor of

politics to read what he is criticizing and to have done some work before he does so; but I desay his eyesight is failing. In his jaunty letter he says I asserted that a self-interested university lobby brought about expansion. But in paragraph 14 of my review I said: "School-teachers and parents were determined that more children should have what they themselves had not enjoyed. The battle to win the public's heart in favour of expansion was over before the Committee reported." He then says that I believe "we are stuck with too many students". From the 1950s onwards I have pleaded at conferences and in speeches and articles for more students and criticized governments for imposing ceilings: recently as in the past (*Hansard* March 14, 1984, December 11, 1985, March 5, 1986 and in paragraph 6 of my review). But self-justification—certainly at this length—is always tedious and often odious. Let me reassure Professor Crick. If he solves he will find I have equivocated and said numbers of foolish things in my time; and I have been singularly unsuccessful in persuading colleagues that the reforms I advocated were needed.

Universities do not exist solely to provide skilled manpower. They have duties to scholarship and the life of the mind. But my generation assumed too readily that whatever our students learnt was adequate training for the production of wealth. We forgot the tag: *virtus post numerum*.

NOEL ANNAN.
16 St John's Wood Road, London NW8.

James Agate

Sir, In his tolerant review (April 11) of James Harding's biography of James Agate Benedict Nightingale is less than fair when he writes that Agate did not think it a duty to analyse carefully the work in hand, and that he could not make head or tail of Pirandello. Agate took immense pains to analyse new drama, both British and foreign. His 1925 review of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is most perceptive. He diligently took apart *And That's the Truth* and *Henry IV* and did not like them. Who does? Who plays Pirandello now, apart from an occasional shot at *Six Characters*? Even the National Theatre has done only one play of his, and that in 1971. Perhaps Agate was right.

It is absurd of Mr Nightingale to speak of "our more severe era" of journalism, when so much of it is slipshod, as indeed later in his review he acknowledges. Who today, now that Tynan is dead and Bernard Levin has lost his way, occupies the kind of space in the public mind that Agate did for so many years? Reviewing *Ego* in 1944, Elizabeth Bowes said that Agate "gives the feel of solitary, ferocious grandeur in a declining world". The vacant eye awaits its eagle. Little songbirds won't do.

DON HATWELL.
85 Monkham Drive, Woodford Green, Essex.

Anne Bracegirdle

Sir, It may be of interest to the students of theatre among your readers to learn that, in the course of my researches into the family and circle of William Congreve (1670-1729), I have ascertained the correct date for the baptism of the actress, Anne Bracegirdle.

Her exact age has long been in dispute, but she was the daughter of Justian Bracegirdle and Martha, nee Furniss, and was baptized November 15, 1671, at St Giles', Northampton.

Her parents had been married at All Saints, Northampton, in February 1667. Among her siblings were Elizabeth (1664-7); Honor (b'd 1668); Justinian (b'd 1670); John (b 1672), who had issue; and Hamlet (b 1674), who married Mercede Brockwell at Woolwich in 1703 and had issue. An older sister, Martha, married John Gyles in 1703, and is mentioned in the will of Edward Porter, who was married (1688; St Mary's) to another older sister, Frances Bracegirdle. It was to the house of Edward and Frances Porter that Congreve went to live till his death in 1729.

Anne Bracegirdle was, therefore, about seventy-seven years old when she died; not

eighty-five as recorded on her tombstone in Westminster Abbey.

I can supply further details to interested enquirers.

JEAN HAYNES.
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'Hobson-Jobson'

Sir, The long and enthusiastic review by D. J. Enright (April 11) of Yule and Burnell's *Hobson-Jobson*, which was first published 100 years ago and is now reissued for the fourth time, seems to indicate that the reviewer was not previously acquainted with the work. It has been in constant demand as an aid for those interested in the history of travel and European links with Asia, with copies of the original editions commanding a high price before the 1968 reprints. Nevertheless it was underutilized, possibly ignored or mistrusted, in the OED lexicographical tradition. The authors of the recent manual *Indian and British English* (P. Nisalan, R. K. Tongue and P. Hosali, OUP, Delhi, 1979) apparently only knew of its existence at second-hand. The eccentricity of the title and apparently limited scope of *A glossary of Anglo-Indian colloquial words*... together with an unfamiliar range of exotic loanwords and a discursive enthusiasm (the "warmth of amateurism" as Anthony Burgess calls it in his new introduction), may have contributed to the lack of acceptance of the work in circles concerned with English literature and lexicography.

Mr Enright remarks that "little is divulged about the authors", and that Yule "was living in Palermo, possibly in retirement from overseas service". It appears remiss of the publishers not to give biographical details of Yule and Burnell, which would have placed the scholarship of *Hobson-Jobson* in a historical perspective. These details might have been extracted from Buckland's *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, or, in the case of Colonel Sir Henry Yule, from the memoir by his daughter in the third edition of his *Book of Ser Marco Polo* (1921). Son of an officer in the East India Company's service whose Persian manuscripts "are full of marginal notes which bear testimony to their attentive perusal by the owner" (C. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol 3, p xviii), Henry Yule in his still-important English editions of Marco Polo and other travellers showed competence over medieval manuscript material in a range of European languages. He received academic recognition from Paris and Edinburgh. Yule's writings have the "warmth" which Anthony Burgess attributes to them; but one should not be misled by "amateurism" in the work of a pioneering nineteenth-century scholar of great breadth and industry; and, one might add, enviable qualifying experience from his previous career: to the Bengal Engineers and his presence on the embassy to Ava in Burma. Yule was also a talented draughtsman, many of whose drawings are preserved in the former India Office Library (M. Archer, *British Drawings in the India Office Library*, vol 1, pp 352-64).

For those concerned with the history of Asian trade, the historical geography of Asia and kindred topics, there is need of an augmented and revised edition of *Hobson-Jobson*, with dated citations given in the pagination of accessible modern critical texts. Yule himself was President of both the Hakluyt Society and the Royal Asiatic Society. Perhaps this task could be undertaken under the auspices of one or the other.

SIMON DIBBY.
Wolfson College, Oxford.

The Vatican Library

Sir, Anthony Pagden's pleasant article about the Vatican Library (March 14) is marred by certain misconceptions. He makes the surprising claim that the Vatican, founded in 1475, "is the oldest surviving library in the world". What about the Bibliotheca Malatestiana in Cesena, which dates from twenty years earlier, or Durham, Hereford, Eigelburg, Admont and Palmar, all of the eleventh or twelfth centuries, Binsfeld of the tenth, St Gall of the eighth or Verona—probably the best claimant

to the title—which can trace its history to the fifth century?

Pagden's statement that the Vatican was "the first ever public library" is equally suspect. A public library was provided in the Guildhall, London, in part by the executors of Richard Whittington, Lord Mayor, in about 1425. What was probably the earliest one in the West was established by St Louis (d 1270) in the Sainte Chapelle, but long before this there were public libraries in Ummayyad Syria, Fomild Egypt and pagan Rome.

Nor is it true that the first Prefect of the Library, Bartolomeo Plotina (not Palatina), gave his name to the Fondo Palatino. The collection is so called because it was the library of the Palatino, removed from Heidelberg during the Thirty Years War and presented by Maximilian of Bavaria to Pope Gregory XV.

Finally, when Pagden says that the Library owns 7,000 incunabula and a million later printed books, but that "only about a third of those are recorded in the modern catalogue", he must be referring to the manuscripts. There is an excellent card index of the printed books which, so far as I have been able to judge, is complete and up to date.

ANTHONY HOBSON.
The Glebe House, Whitsbury, Fordingbridge, Hampshire.

Sir, The Biblioteca Vaticana is certainly one of the most fascinating of the world's libraries, but it cannot claim to be the first public library, as asserted by Anthony Pagden. Many of the libraries of the ancient world could fairly be called public. But omitting those, and starting only from Renaissance times, the library of the Dominican House of San Marco in Florence, which was opened to the public in 1444 in the spacious quarters designed by Michelozzo, antedates the Vatican Library by a generation. The manuscripts for this library, as B. L. Ullman and I demonstrate in *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence* (Padua, 1972), were bequeathed in 1437 by the Florentine humanist Niccolò Niccoli to a committee of distinguished fellow-citizens to establish a public library under carefully specified rules. Cosimo de' Medici, one of the committee, convinced the others to permit him to use this collection as the basis for a library in San Marco, which he was rebuilding at the time. The library remained readily accessible to the scholarly public from 1444 until, at least the end of the fifteenth century, its collection supplied exemplars for innumerable new manuscripts, such as those made by Vespasiano da Bisticci for collectors like Federico da Montefeltro, and served as a rich resource for scholars like Politian and Vettori; thus profoundly influencing the humanist movement. Nicolaus V, a friend of both Niccoli's and Cosimo's, no doubt derived from their example the idea of leaving his books to the Vatican collection, later formally established by Sixtus IV as the Biblioteca Vaticana.

PHILIP A. STADTER.
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Sales of Library Books

Sir, I feel that I should respond to H. R. Woudhuysen's comments regarding the University of East Anglia Library's sale of books about Norfolk and Norwich (March 28).

The implication is that the University Library is selling off unique material when, in fact, all that has been sent for auction are duplicates of material already held in stock. The proceeds from this particular sale will be spent on material which will enrich our considerable local history collections. There is no question of our selling off rare books to meet the tradesmen's bills.

I hope that my comments will reassure friends of the University of East Anglia that we would not consider disposing of our special collections. One of the purposes of a university library is to stimulate study and research by the acquisition, maintenance and enhancement of material. Despite substantial financial cut-backs, we are still, I think, fulfilling that aim, albeit on a reduced (and reducing) scale.

DAVID M. BAKER.
The Library, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

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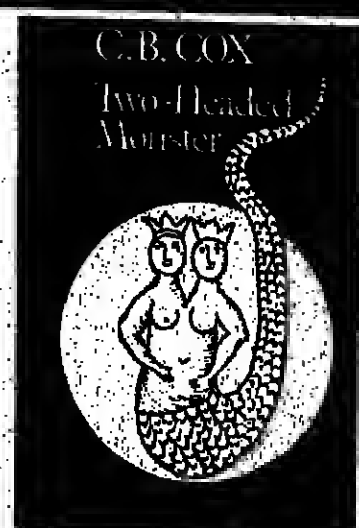
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COMMENTARY

The age of immaturity

Peter Kemp

Bookmark: Still Angry After All These Years? BBC 2

Putting the Angry Young Man movement in period context, *Bookmark's* film reeled out scenes of the mid-1950s: women in little hats and calf-length duster coats high-heeled it past a Lyons Corner House; frothy coffee ateamed in glass cups; rock and roll exploded. But, as rapidly became apparent, the two writers most scrutinized—Colin Wilson and John Osborne—did not exemplify the attitudes of an era so much as those of a phase: adolescence. Though *Bookmark's* survey was patchy—ignoring academic and regional specimens of the Angry Young Man on view in the early work of Amis, Wain, Braine and the like, and never really exploring the writings of Wilson and Osborne—it left you in no doubt about a pervading juvenility. Teenage traits—from mutinous self-consciousness to iconoclastic assertiveness and a taste for the role of the mooching loner—suffused its subjects' behaviour, past and present.

The utterance of the word "sex" in an interview, for instance, had Osborne instantly regressing to a callow-looking leer and wagged eyebrows. Watching film of his younger self, Wilson observed, "I look and sound rather weird. I still agree with everything I said." What was weirdest, though, was that he looked and sounded virtually unaltered: the same boyish, bespectacled face, above the familiar roll-necked, heavy sweater, enunciated the same naïve notions. In his twenties, it transpired, Wilson used to write in a room decorated with a quotation from Einstein. In his fifties—penning his books in a den labelled "Colin's Place"—he keeps up this association. Working "like Einstein", he pointed out, as much for his own satisfaction as for other

people's, he produces books that are all "in a sense the same idea . . . an attempt to expand it in the same way that Einstein spent his whole life trying to expand Relativity".

Let the point of this analogy be missed, Wilson further informed a politely poker-faced Ian Hamilton, "The fact is, I have always assumed myself to be the greatest writer of the twentieth century, and nothing has happened to make me change my mind." It is as "the major English writer, the equivalent of Goethe or Dante" that he likes to view himself, an extract read from one of his journals disclosed. Sounding like some bumptious boffin of the Sixties, he airily declared, "What I've been trying to do, basically, is to completely reverse the whole foundation of modern thought." This entails, apparently, much emphasis on the merits of youthful zest rather than faded pessimism, and an unremitting insistence on the need to "stand completely alone".

Similarities with Osborne surface here. "Hope", he rather unexpectedly affirmed on

the programme, is his watchword; "enthusiasm", in a passage quoted from *Look Back in Anger*, was scathingly advocated. Standing alone has its relevance to his drama too, with its penchant for prickly misfits and diatribe rather than dialogue. Not that either Osborne or Wilson—who each bristled at mention of the other's name—would have been pleased to note that they had anything in common.

Seeming an embattled solitary clearly meant much to each of them. What they noticeably piqued themselves on was not being angry but angering. Osborne fondly recalled being pursued down Charing Cross Road by indignant theatre patrons. Wilson happily re-lived a scene—climbing his reputation as a baiter of the bourgeoisie—in which he was set upon by his girlfriend's parents, one brandishing a horse-whip, the other an umbrella. The Press were at hand to snap up this tableau. And a symbiotic relationship with Fleet Street, Roger Thompson's film displayed, was crucial to the thriving of the Angry Young Man movement.



Jack B. Yeats' "In the Tram", 1923, reproduced from Jack B. Yeats in the National Gallery of Ireland by Hilary Pyle (94pp. National Gallery of Ireland, £12. 0903162 29 6).

In the depths of the country

T. O. Treadwell

GEORGE FARQUHAR
The Beaux' Stratagem
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

The Beaux' Stratagem (1707) is routinely viewed as a transitional work, a play in which the heartless witlessness of the Restoration modulates into the amiable sentimentality of eighteenth-century comedy. It is true that Farquhar's heroes, Almwell and Archer, seem rather tame compared to the cynical phallocrats who swagger through the comedies of Béranger and Wycherley, and that feminine chastity, though variously threatened, emerges from the play untarnished, but *The Beaux' Stratagem* is a more subversive work than the conventional view implies. Peter James's new production is intelligent, well paced, and strongly acted; but beneath its pleasant surface a darker play struggles to emerge.

The Beaux' Stratagem is set in Lichfield, and Almwell and Archer, like Dorinda and Mrs Sullen; the play's two heroines, are much concerned with the contrast between the bovine dullness of country life and the glittering world of the metropolis. Although Almwell and Archer see clearly that the values of fashionable society are mercenary and corrupt, any moral repugnance is easily overcome by the glamour and luxury of London life. Foraying in disguise into the country in search of a marriageable heiress they regard themselves as knights-errant, but from another perspective they are no more than confidence-tricksters; a point that Farquhar hints upon by identifying them with the highwaymen of the subplot, travellers under false colours whose robberies are at least more open. The values of the country, on the other hand, could be said to be represented by Lady Bountiful, who has given away half her fortune for the good of her neighbours and who devotes her days to acts of charity for which the urban sophisticates despise her.

A backdrop showing Lichfield Cathedral dominates the set, providing a focus of attention at every scene change; it is clearly visible through the windows of Lady Bountiful's house, where much of the action takes place. The cathedral is a neat visual symbol for the positive values which *The Beaux' Stratagem* covertly associates with country life, and its presence in the background should expose the shallowness of the glamour which the play ostensibly admires, but the point is blunted by playing Lady Bountiful as an ineffectual old busybody. The disturbing resemblance between the two predatory beaux and Gibbet (the highwayman, which the text carefully suggests, is muffled here, so that the seediness of the enterprise in which Almwell and Archer are engaged is not made clear; and this is exacerbated by a poorly focused performance from Gibbet, one of the few weaknesses in the generally excellent cast.

The decision to perform Farquhar's text virtually uncut is a welcome one. The Count Belair subplot, usually omitted in performance, enriches the texture of the play. Archer's songs are clearly performed, and using on-stage musicians to accompany Almwell's impassioned monologues on Dorinda's riches is a witty and effective touch. An ill-judged substitution of the name of the present Prime Minister for that of Queen Anne in the prologue raises fears that the production intends to tilt at the windmill of contemporary relevance, but thankfully these prove to be groundless. Indeed the social issues which *The Beaux' Stratagem* most directly addresses, the liberality of the divorce laws, is likely to be redundant for a large portion of any London audience in 1986.

The strong cast, headed by Paul Freeman's Archer and Anna Carter's Mrs Sullen, serve the play well; there is a particularly enjoyable performance by Paul Humpole as the crooked innkeeper Boniface. Farquhar's comedy is accessible and entertaining, and if it is less compelling than this production suggests its revival is nevertheless to be applauded.

Playing for sympathy

Lois Potter

Edmund Ironside
Bridge Lane Theatre, Lodon SW11

This may not be quite the first revival of *Edmund Ironside*. According to its Malton Society editor, the manuscript was revised for performance at some time in the 1630s. Perhaps its patriotism and old-fashioned drama played a nostalgic appeal. The reason for its current revival is, of course, very different. Erle Sam's modern-spelling text (reviewed in the TLS last week) has made the play available; his insistence that it is by Shakespeare has made it interesting. Quite rightly, Tim Heath, the director, has given it every possible chance.

All the signals indicate a sympathetic treatment of the play. The costumes and lighting are in soft, warm colours, harmonizing with the brick walls of the theatre. The battle scenes are simply and effectively staged with ladders and dry ice. The map of Britain on the floor gives extra point to lines like "The ground thou standest upon is Ironside's". Specially composed music, by Martyn Brabbins, creates a sense of excitement. *Edmund Ironside* is seen as a play about real motives and emotions, not as a pseudo-Seneccan, tyrant-and-vice morality-chronicle. Its large, and mainly young, cast plays with total commitment.

But there are two problems with this treatment: the language and the plot. The play is dominated by its three villains: the Danish usurper Canute, his sycophantic advisor Edric, and Edric's comic servant Stich. Since Edmund and the other English are so vastly superior to their enemies, only treachery (mainly Edric's) seems to be keeping the Danes on British soil. Canute also has the support of the thuggish Archbishop of Canterbury, who at one point shares the pro-English Archbishop of York onstage. But two English followers of Canute decide to desert him for

Osborne, whose *Look Back in Anger* repeatedly crackles to the reading of Sunday papers and commentary on their contents, found a journalistic champion in Kenneth Tynan. Wilson had his in Daniel Farsoo, author of an article about him headed "I meet a Genius with indigestion", and seen riffling rapturously through his dossier of press-mentions of Wilson.

For an advocate of standing alone, Wilson showed a remarkably attentive and receptive ear for what others said about him: "I remember Nancy Spain came out with an article . . . Time ran an article . . .". As a hermit, he proved skilled at keeping in the public eye. "That's right, Col, build up the legend", a chum applauded as reporters swarmed to record Wilson's habit of sleeping out, until the weather broke, on Hampstead Heath, in a re-enactment of this interlude for *Bookmark*, Wilson obligingly let himself be interviewed zipped into a sleeping-bag wedged among the roots of a tree. Other highlights of his past were re-lived too—as when, touring the flat where he had thrown a party to launch *The Outsider*, he recalled the memorable moments it had seen: "Michael Hastings was sick in the corner of the room. Mary Ure got drunk on my brandy and said I wasn't as good a writer as John Osborne . . .".—remembrances paralleled by Jimmy Porter's guffawing account, also heard on the programme, of turning up for his marriage into the bourgeoisie "full of beer for breakfast" and with a best man he had "met in the pub that morning".

Unintentionally, it seemed, the delectable summing-up of the ethos of the Angry Young Man came from a placid middle-aged woman friend of Wilson. The era that saw their vogue was, she wistfully sighed, her golden age: "a period between the restrictions of childhood and the rather different restrictions of adulthood". It is from this period of untrammelled immaturity, *Bookmark's* film valuably showed, that the obstreperous energies of Wilson and Osborne emanate.

Edmund even though this means leaving their children as hostages: "Tut, 'tis no matter; if they die, they die . . . He that sent them can send us more again." Canute duly cuts off the boys' bands and noses (on-stage); "Oh Edmund, never trust a foreign king", they shout defiantly. But virtuous Edmund keeps falling into every trap set for him.

Finally, at Edric's suggestion, the two leaders decide to settle their claims to single combat. Edmund expresses firm faith that right will prevail, adding as an afterthought that he is also "big, and far more strong" than his opponent. Sure enough, a few rounds are enough for Canute. The play ends in his surrender and vows of friendship all round.

Ironside's best chance of success would seem to lie in the grim humour resulting from the contrast between the characters' political importance and the personal pettiness which emerges in their flat-footed lines. But, despite the programme's insistence that the play be taken on its own merits and not in the light of Shakespeare's later work, it is clear that the actors cannot help seeing it as the work of the author of *Macbeth* and *Lea*. Obviously comic scenes and characters are played (very effectively) for comedy, but whenever there is doubt about the intended effect everyone goes for psychological depth. Thus, the two false traitors, after brisily consigning their children to death, (a particularly un-Shakespearean moment) do their best, with no help from the text, to look like tragic figures. With more imagination, Gregory Cox, an impressive, well-known stage actor, might have been more convincing as a villain.

Edmund, though, is an energetic and not nearly unobservant responsiveness. Not many do their best, with no help from the text, to look like tragic figures. With more imagination, Gregory Cox, an impressive, well-known stage actor, might have been more convincing as a villain. Edric is a comic servant Stich. Since Edmund and the other English are so vastly superior to their enemies, only treachery (mainly Edric's) seems to be keeping the Danes on British soil. Canute also has the support of the thuggish Archbishop of Canterbury, who at one point shares the pro-English Archbishop of York onstage. But two English followers of Canute decide to desert him for

Swansea's Rimbaud

Claude Rawson

PAUL FERRIS (Editor)
The Collected Letters of Dylan Thomas
94pp. Dent, £20.
040046357
PAUL FERRIS
Dylan Thomas
44pp. Penguin, £3.95.
014002122

The shuffling into the world of almost a thousand pages of Dylan Thomas's prose will not be greeted by everyone as a matter for rejoicing. The pleasures to be extracted from his bulging word-hoard are indeed few, and the patient reader inching his way through may need a metal-detector to find them. But they are there: added together, they account for perhaps 2 per cent of the volume, but that's nearly twenty pages, better than nothing.

For example, embedded in a pompously impudent series of *ex cathedra* judgments on other poets in 1938, is to be found this mannered but perceptive comment:

Spender, Rupert Brooke of the Depression, comes to his slight, lyrical, nostalgic talent to a dumpty and rhetorical death; I find his communism unattractive; before a poet can get into contact with society he must, surely, be able to get into contact with himself, and Spender has only tickled his own outside with a feather.

True, the phrase "Rupert Brooke of the Depression" is said to have been coined by Norman Cameron (it's not the only one of Thomas's more memorable phrases to have been thought up by someone else, and second-hand phrase-making may have been what Thomas went to after he kicked his early habit of printing other people's poems as his own). True also that the tone is both starchy and callow, and the surrounding material is hard to read without embarrassment. Nevertheless, the comment catches something of the feckless, self-absorbed thinness of Spender's political poems in the 1930s and "Spender has only tickled his own outside with a feather" has a cartoonist's aptness.

Spender (from whom Thomas bagged and woned favours, and to whom he addressed prophetic letters) seems to have been a good Thomas subject. Here is a much later glimpse of the Spenders in Florence, followed by a general sketch of the Florentine intellectual scene (one of several, including some funny accounts of other anglophones in Tuscany):

Spender was very gay, Natasha British as a hockeystick . . . in flatfooted shoes she thumped the hot Florence pavements, gawky as an Arthur Marshall schoolboy, shouting English, elbowing the droll Florentines from her gym-knickered way. I have met many of the young intellectuals of Florence, who are nervous and damp; they do not write much but oh how they edit! They live with their mothers, ride motor-scooters, and translate Apollinaire.

The account is strongly visualized and has unusual verbal economy. It rings true, although Thomas's better sketches often strike one as having more animation than justice, as in this adolescent outburst against Wordsworth in a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson:

Old Father William was a human nannysat with a poetical obsession . . . Quote Shelley, yes. But Wordsworth was a tea-time bore, the great Frost of the hills with a daffodil pressed to his lips, and his poems were like a child's chest. Catch him in his pompous mood, his Virgiloid and Victorian mood, his heavy-footed humdrumness pursuing a wretched dog down a blind alley full of the broken bones of words . . . he describes what mystics have been known to feel, but his mind doesn't feel anything, he even a pain in the neck.

Looking through the immature and perverse personality, though, is an energetic and not nearly unobservant responsiveness. Not many do their best, with no help from the text, to look like tragic figures. With more imagination, Gregory Cox, an impressive, well-known stage actor, might have been more convincing as a villain.

Edmund, though, is an energetic and not nearly unobservant responsiveness. Not many do their best, with no help from the text, to look like tragic figures. With more imagination, Gregory Cox, an impressive, well-known stage actor, might have been more convincing as a villain. Edric is a comic servant Stich. Since Edmund and the other English are so vastly superior to their enemies, only treachery (mainly Edric's) seems to be keeping the Danes on British soil. Canute also has the support of the thuggish Archbishop of Canterbury, who at one point shares the pro-English Archbishop of York onstage. But two English followers of Canute decide to desert him for

in another derisive list of poets in 1938:

It-in-the-night whistlers [Whistlers?] and Barkers, Empson leaning over his teeth to stare down an ice-cold throat at the mathematical mystery of his doom-treading boots, Grigson leaning over his racks to look at his balls. . . .

The same letter contains examples of an alternative pictorialism. "People like Oawesworth, who are not poets at all but just bearded boils in the dead armpit of the nineties" belongs to Thomas's Bosch-and-Dali style of comic macabre, and is more amusing than its counterparts in the poems, with their dead undoing their bushy jaws, bags of blood letting out their files and baggage-breasted ladders in the deadwood.

Thomas's satirical humour, like Pope's or Shelley's, flourished in informal settings. He said of a well-known poet-editor that "his place is already reserved in the lower regions where, for all eternity, he shall read the cantos of Ezra Pound to a company of red-hot devils". An otherworldly variant is the Valhalla in which Thomas places Wagner:

his greatness lies in girth rather than in depth; it lacks humour and subtlety; he creates everything for you in a vast Cedi de Mille way; his orchestration is a perpetual "close-up"; there is altogether too much showmanship and exhibitionism about him. His Valhalla is a very large and very splendid place, but built in the style of a German baroque castle: the tapestries are too voluminous & highly coloured, there is too great a display of gold; while the gods that hold dominion over it are florid deliries, pulled out with self-importance, wearing gaudy garments and angelic watch-chains.

There's a Dunciad quality in this portrayal: the *Dunciad* of mayoral processions and heaving aldermanic shapes, "Glad chains, warm furs, broad banners, and broad faces", and hurgherly anti-heroes lordling it in a vast and vulgar bell.

Thomas liked to align himself, or to see others aligning him, with poetry's counter-cultural heroes: Villon, Whitman, Rimbaud, explorers of debauch, rhapsodes of the senses. And he simultaneously liked to deny or undercut such alignments. He "would not be surprised" to be called "a sort of modern Villon", but that's "because I am used to listening to balls". In the case of Whitman and Rimbaud, the analogy is offered by Thomas himself, and there is a parade of denial but of self-undercutting: he's a "middle-class, beardless Walt", "the Rimbaud of Cwmwdonkin Drive". Thomas later said it was Roy Campbell who first called him "Swansea's Rimbaud", but Thomas appropriated the analogy and offered it in his own name. What he added was his own suburban address, Cwmwdonkin Drive, as he added the middle-classness to his Whitmanian label. The additions, in both cases, come not with a bang but a sinner, but the suburbanite element should not be underestimated. In his first surviving letter to Vernon Watkins, from Cornwall, Thomas stressed his lack of enthusiasm for the beautiful countryside:

I'd rather the boundless slope of a suburban hill, the Blitz, the Acadia, Rookery Nook, Curlew Avenue, all these miles of green fields and flowery cliffs and dull sea going on, and on, and cows lying down and down. I'm not a country man; I stand for, if anything, the asphalt, the provincial drive, the morning café, the evening pub. . . .

Suburban values and a suburban décor were more important to him, this suggests, than all epiphanies of tavern abasement or the celebratory rural idyll of "Fern Hill". His wife Caitlin, according to Paul Ferris's biography, "used to laugh at him for being bourgeois at heart, a charge no one could level at her". This was during quarrels, and both parties presumably took it that he was being belittled. One may suspect that Thomas only tolerated the suburban persona if proffered by himself, and then with a suggestion of paradox; inviting the counter-protestation: Thomas's small, repetitive, of social roles, fully represented in the letters, is in fact defined by their opposition to the bourgeois image. As Randy dandy or roaring boy, as little boy lost or helpless bad debtor, even as cad and sponger, he offered himself as an offender against burgherly and suburban values, thus letting out the archetypal suburban idea of the poet. His professions of guilt show a luxuriating readiness to see himself through the eyes of the conventional and the reproving.

The letters are full of these accessions of guilt, baby-Rabelaisian in inventive extravagance,

but expressing unRabelaisian complacency:

If, in some weeks' time, you see a dog-like shape with a torn tail and a spaniel eye, its tail between its legs, cowering and snuffing up . . . it will be me; look carefully at its snuffing ramp that asks to be kicked, its trembling, penholing paw that scribbles, "kick me", in the dust.

The doggy routine was a special favourite: "I would sooner smarm like a fart-licking spaniel than starve in a world of fat bones"; "I am writing to him on bent knees, wagging my bum like a spaniel"; "I am, if you like, a middle-aged dog with a dirty mind". The dogginess was not confined to private confession. The correspondence shows "the dog among the fairies, the rip and cur among the myths" being offered to the public in poems and stories, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* advertises it on a title-page. The switch of a single word transforms Joyce's painterly title into a rib-prodding Shandean turn: self-portrait turns into self-exhibition, frisky and salivating



beyond Sterne's own puppyish pantomimes. Thomas's letters can be read as a prolonged effervescence of smirking contrition, running to 950 pages over twenty-two years. When he isn't apologizing for being drunk, or late, or absent, or rude, or conjugally delinquent, or for asking for money and for having asked before, or for the endlessly interesting deficiencies of his latest poem, then he is apologizing for not having written the present letter, sooner or even for what he has just written in it ("Reading back over that, I agree it looks preciously like nonsense"). The self-deprecation creates enabling conditions for the praise it purports to deny or deflate, and offers scope for displays of self-analytical acumen (the pseudo-severe accounts of his own poems as a case in point), as "middle-class . . . Walt" both puts forward and plays down Thomas's Whitmanian pretensions. The Walt he really resembled was Disney, not Whitman. Thomas's reputation for booming luxuries of verbal music has obscured the fact that he was a highly pictorial poet, and while the cinematic allusions in his poems have been noticed, their kinship with the visual humour and the genial sentimentality of Disney's animated cartoons is less often recognized. Thomas, in fact, writes astutely of Disney in relation to Auden's poems in a letter of 1938.

Thomas was quick to see through the introspective problings of other people, kicking off Pamela Hansford Johnson for the "coy questioning of the heart" to one of her youthful writings, or Louis MacNeice for questioning the "honesty" of his retreating to "a little cottage in Ireland" in wartime; such people who question their own honesty; such people who walk critically behind their actions, observe the action of writing a poem before the poem itself. Readers familiar with the normal style in which Thomas carried out his own unrelenting "personality-parade", or for that matter with Thomas's own wartime record, might be startled at the empathy of this. But there's no real need for empathy. For one thing Thomas was an incoherence. For one thing Thomas was a quick to see through his own coils of self-analysis or self-castration as he was through those of other people, and to turn such recognitions

themselves into a further inward coil. In the well-known first letter to Vernon Watkins, characteristic in being on this point both posturing and perspicacious, he said that his fear as a poet was not of "any sudden cessation or drying-up" but of "an ingrowing, the impulse growing like a toenail into the artifice". "Ingrowing" was a word he seems to have been fond of, on such matters, and the inward regress was potentially infinite. The self-mockery in "Ingrowing . . . toenail" is not a breach or arrest of this process but merely its next coil, and the next coil after that is to joke about the joking or undercut the undercutting, without end.

The matter of the wartime record comes over in a rather different style, with no infinite regress or coils of self-apology. The "enormity", if that's what it was, lay in the naked assertion of sentiments which others would have found hard to express without coils of self-apology. In September 1939 he announced that he couldn't "raise up any feeling" about Hitlerism as a reason for going to war: "the demon Hitlerism can go up its own bottom". Thomas's "point" was that he didn't want to go into the army, and the hindsight of history makes his various comments on Hitler sound more outrageous than they really were: "I think a squirrel stumbling off least of equal importance as Hitler's invasions" (July 1938) is more callous than callous, an affected way of parading his belief that poetry is above politics. He also went in for antisemitic quips, undoubtedly disagreeable but, in those pre-Holocaust days, as likely to proceed from a shoddy thoughtlessness as from active malevolence.

Thomas would of course have known even in the pre-war 1930s that such remarks would be repellent to many. They were pieces of adversarial grinning, not to be compared, for example, with Genet's statements of principled admiration for Hitler and for massacre, also designed to outrage well-meaning bourgeois sensibilities. By September 1939, Thomas was making frantic efforts to avoid the army, suggesting various dodges to anyone who might be able to help, and writing several letters to that end in his special begging style, half cringing, half cocky. But he didn't usually claim high motives, religious principles or special grounds of conscience, and sometimes expressed contempt for those who did. "My own 'stand' is a bit," he did however admit a willingness to invoke any such principles as a practical dodge, among other dodges.

When he secured his "soft job" writing propaganda film-scripts, he did one about Hitler which accused Hitler of dodging military service. A smaller piquancy of Thomas's own dodging days was his complaint that "many fifth-rate trustworthy people are rattling, backing out", meaning not those who evaded conscription but those who signed up, "belag herole or laxy". He was so pleased with this sentiment, and its formulation, that he used it in more than one letter. If Thomas's "cynical" candour about war-service differs from his more usual apologetic style, it may be because for once he had discovered a pose which might seem really anti-social. I suspect that Thomas's lavish apologizing on other matters was partly designed to draw attention to delinquencies which risked seeming insufficiently interesting in their own right. He has only to think, again, of Genet to see how superficial and cosily self-cherishing Thomas's anti-social posture is. When Thomas writes of "anti-social softies like myself", he is as ever proclaiming his Shandean naughtiness, not an existentialist outcast's radical criminality. As in the rest of the letters, he remains more puppy than pariah.

So much for enormity, which Thomas, for all his self-mythologizing, never really pretended to. Indeed, from his earliest letters to the last year of his life Thomas made a big production of being "little": "An odd little person . . . a thin curly little person, smoking too many cigarettes, with a crooked lung . . . little with no health at all . . . lonely little person . . . nice little soul . . . little Welsh ear . . . little feet . . . little poet". Half a year before his death in 1953, hoping that some friend would give him a tree lodging in New York, he told John Malcolm Brinnin "I am only small, after all, and alone, though loud". By then, he was in fact rather bloated. Ferris's biography says he was

even in the days of the adolescent letters, five foot six in height and not exactly a featherweight. And he knew it. By the time he was uttering his provocative "enormities" about not getting excited about Hitler (and in the very same letter) he was saying that he didn't want to waste his "little body" on the battlefield and recognizing as an afterthought that "It's little no longer, I'm like a walrus".

Like all Thomas's plays, the littleness game had severely practical purposes (the obtaining of sympathy, money, lodging) as well as self-mythologizing ones, not that the two were ultimately distinguishable. In the letters to women, Thomas's protestations of littleness were a courting move, a bid for sexual sympathy (even more perhaps than for sexual favours). They signal an ambiguous or reverse machismo of helpless loveliness, attenuated health, and suffering borne with a brave playfulness. There was an occasional effect of gonorrhoeal infection, which had the advantage of proclaiming sexual prowess while perhaps removing the obligation to perform. He also ("little person . . . with a crooked lung") played at being consumptive, a debility which in those days still had its paradoxical aura of artistic distinction and sexual appeal.

Thomas's confessions of smallness and debility take their place in a poetic tradition of self-disparaging courtship, perhaps initiated by Pope in contexts of defeated gallantry. He sometimes wrote, and noted, like a character out of the Cave of Spleen, hypochondriac and inexhaustibly fantastical, especially in the domain of erotic obsession. It was not necessary to have read Pope. The formula was picked up by poets who did not share Pope's physical infirmities and seems to have become something of a stereotype. Christopher Smart, whose boozed-distended appearance bore an uncanny resemblance to Thomas's, wrote a poem in which "The Author Apologizes to a Lady, for His being a Little Man" and speaks of "The amorous dwarf that courts you to his arms". The young Thomas Moore, author of *Irish Melodies* and *Lalla Rookh*, began by publishing some milk-and-water erotic verse under the pseudonym of Thomas Little, a name which, by a piquant coincidence of literary history, Dylan's "little . . . Thomas" reproduced back to front.

The question is not whether Thomas knew these precedents. Roy Campbell noted that Thomas found Pope difficult to speak in BBC readings, and Thomas himself reported a similar difficulty with a "wonderful poem" by

Smart (probably *Jubilat Agno*) which Edith Sitwell had urged him to read. He was very unlike both poets, and perhaps most resembling Moore, as a genially self-displaying poet with a high public profile, a talent for melodious fluency in his otherwise bad but highly popular poems, and a genuine gift for lively observant prose in his letters and journals. The comparison does Thomas too much honour, but it prompts the reflection that certain kinds of showmanship and verbal facility may conceal a sharper talent, which expresses itself more readily in private contexts, free from the temptations of public exposure. Private contexts were hardly, in Thomas's case, a guarantee against coarse self-exhibition, but they helped. If you have to choose, buy Moore's journals instead.

Both in his sensible biography, now published by Penguin in a revised edition, and in his edition of the *Collected Letters*, Paul Ferris presents Thomas with tolerance and sympathy. He gives excellent glimpses of the writing career from its origins on a provincial newspaper in Swansea in the 1930s to the drunken phantasmagoria of the visit to America where, in his last years, Thomas gave poetry readings, was lionized and died. The London of the

Is it a period?

William Scammell

A. T. TOLLEY
The Poetry of his Forties
394pp. Manchester University Press. £21 (paperback, £6.95).
0719017084

The 1930s had "MacSpaunday" and a cause, the fight against Fascism. The 1950s had a Movement and disavowed all causes. The 1940s had a hogs movement, the Apocalypse, and a real war, whose poets have never achieved the popularity or textbook status accorded the earlier and later poets. Quite why this should be so is a mystery. The poets of the First World War are as well known, and as well loved, as any of this century. The poets of the Second come a long way behind. This comparative neglect is not for want of skilled advocacy. Ted Hughes, Geoffrey Hill and Charles Tomlinson, to name only three, have, all written appreciatively of Keith Douglas; Ian Hamilton and others have urged the importance of Alun Lewis. Yet for every single reader of "Desert Flowers" or "The Jungle" there are probably hundreds who know only "Naming of Parts", and thousands more who think that Dylan Thomas is the only name of interest between Auden and Larkin.

A. T. Tolley's conscientious and encyclopaedic survey of the period suggests various reasons for this lamentable underestimation. One is the sheer volume and badness of much of the stuff that was printed in those boom years of poetry publishing and reading. (*Penguin New Writing* printed 100,000 copies immediately after the war, and folded when circulation sank to a mere 40,000.) Another, perhaps, is the success of the pre-emptive strike launched by Owen, Rosenberg and Sassoon on a particular subject-matter. A third, hinted at above, is that there is no convenient flag or motto under which the best poets of the period can be enrolled. Owen and co all had essentially the same war to write about; Fuller, Ross, Lewis, Douglas, Allison, Causley all had different ones, though all were in the services; and the civilians had different ones again. It was a more complex war, militarily and politically, and this is reflected both in the war poets themselves and in those who grew up under the shadow of the war, such as Hughes and Hill. We exorcise the First because its mass brutality served no conceivable human purpose. We tolerate, and to some extent even celebrate, the Second because it was, as these things go, just that very fact is inhibiting to a twentieth-century writer, accustomed to anathematizing both politics and war.

The Poetry of the Forties is compendious but erratic, devoting far too much space to ephemera and ponderous lists of names, and too little to the writers who matter. Who said what, which poet, published in what movement,

1930s and 1940s is the main setting, however: literary pubs, *New Verse*, the BBC, Thomas's friendships or entanglements with Geoffrey Grigson, Roy Campbell, Edith Sitwell, the Spenders, Rayner Heppenstall, John Davenport. Ferris knows when to deflate Thomas's pretensions and does it without Thomas's pretentious pleasure in self-deflation. When Thomas hints at gonorrhoea, Ferris's footnote says that it's an "open question" whether he had the disease. When Thomas says the name Dylan meant "prince of darkness", Ferris says it probably "means nothing more than 'sea'". When Thomas boasts of having been "thrown down the stairs" at a Mosley meeting, Ferris's note says that, "Thomas was not thrown down the stairs". The commentary to the letters is, however, not always as informative as it might be. An appendix to this edition prints some additional letters, "chosen by rule-of-thumb as being of no great importance". It's an unnecessary and cumbersome separation, which complicates chronological sequence in an arbitrary and confusing way. Some of the letters in the appendix are indeed more interesting than some in the body of the book. But it is in the main a workmanlike edition and makes available an interesting and ably case-history.

groups, magazines were going where is made abundantly clear, and to that extent it is a useful reference book. When it comes to making judgments, however, the author has a tendency to hedge his bets. Durrell's poetry is introduced as "the side product of a major novelist", for example, then epilogued as "among the finest of the period". George Barker is full of "circumlocutions . . . pomposities . . . clashing images" but wrote "some of the most moving poetry of the decade". Julian Symonds's poem "Pub" is charged with employing "The abracadabra of thirties portentiousness" but it "is not to be despised", indeed "it has a decided distinction". There are odd statements dotted throughout the book: Auden's "New Year Letter" has "never had many admirers" (not true); the poets of the 1940s are said to have had no influence on later writers (not true); Demetrios Capetanakis, the Greek poet-friend of John Lehmann, is likened to Emily Dickinson (ludicrous); the angry young men of the 1950s and the Movement are said to have renewed the "affective radicalism" of the anarcho-left 1930s (try telling that to Terry Eagleton or Kingsley Amis).

Worse than the hedging and occasional dottiness is the inability to distinguish between mediocrity and talent. George Woodcock and Ruthven Todd and many more are treated with serious attention, whereas Terence Tiller gets ticked off for being "cold and inhuman". F. T. Prince's "Soldiers Bathing" is accused of having a poor conclusion - "the suspicion that it is literary posturing is heightened by the ease with which the poem accommodates the Shakespearean reference to man as 'Poor bare forked animal'". "Naming of Parts" exhibits "emptiness" and preciosity. Alun Lewis's later poems "do not offer an achieved coherence . . . he could never attain the inwardness he had with his Welsh experience". Keith Douglas displays "a tinge of disillusioned bedonism in his outlook" and his war poems seem "at a loss to find a resolution". Professor Tolley cites "How to Kill", one of Douglas's finest poems, as an example, and "wonders whether the poem might not have ended here" - i.e. a line and a half into the third stanza: "Vergas, meinich!" has "blemished" language and "its rhythms lose their subtlety as the poem concludes in a somewhat contrived and obvious irony". One expects to find a certain percentage of judgments to disagree with in a survey of this kind, but this degree of blindness towards some of the major figures of the period must be considered a flaw. Partial amends are made by a sympathetic treatment of Roy Fuller (though he gets considerably less space than Durrell and Barker), and it's good to see fine poets like Bernard Spencer and Alan Ross getting their due. Norman Cameron and Roy Campbell, on the other hand, are conspicuous by their absence, as are Graves and Moore. There is a valuable sixty-page bibliography at the end of the book, but the period - if it is a period - still awaits its final book.

Legs on wheels

Behold the Master Species which haruspicates its faeces and builds amazing churches where an invisible God has perches, a sort of playful demon that christens itself human, the top of the great tree of evolutionary existence. It lays out gardens, uses up hydrocarbons, has forgotten how to walk but stuffs itself with talk, jumps into the car if it has to go a yard to get the cigarettes and hoards, like nuts, regrets. A challenge to the seasons, it has its special reasons for poisoning itself with recipes for health, but though it screws the planet from Andamau to Thanet it dreams a Green Revival and sponsors the survival of all attractive creatures (O hide your ugly features, you vultures, snakes and rats and purr you pussy cats!). This arbitrary biped invents a far-off Sky-Bed where lies a scolding Father working himself into a lather, and having stripped the jungles our very Prince of Mongrels likes to settle down in some well-hemstitched town dotted with aforementioned churches and rook-loving birches: there its family chariot will so succinctly carry it the sure suburban round it hardly touches ground. Light verse's inclination is not to indignation but yet its rhymes and rhythms may chooee the noble Houyhnhnms above the Yahooes shouting on any public outing, and theo the doggerel canon fiends moral tales to hang on, looks at stumpy legs and foreheads tall as eggs, applauds the life force which inhabits touch and itch and apurs us to the station of superior adaptation. May we avoid disaster, escaping ever faster from all the patee deaths (Aids, cancer, madness, me), rejoice, we swirl on wheels instead of our bare heels and changing down for climbing perfect our human timing, unnatural in our daring, quite naturally despairing of just our own devices but clever in a crisis, we are the where it's at.

ROBERT DODD

Meaning and material

Terry Eagleton

ROLAND BARTHES
L'Aventure sémiologique
199pp. Paris: Seuil. 99fr.
240 0008936 X
The Responsibility of Forms: Critical essays on music, art and representation
Translated by Richard Howard
312pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.
0631 147462

Lurking beneath the clinical elegance of Roland Barthes's prose is a sense of nausea at the stupidity of the natural. It is as though Barthes, unlike the rest of us, never quite recovered from the shock of discovering that all that a culture takes as obvious - its political norms, gender roles, modes of representation - is no more than an arbitrary selection from the incommensurable range of signifying practices available to humanity. As a homosexual, Barthes knew the tyranny of the normative in the most intimately oppressive of ways; and though his writing compulsively sublimates such misery into the fetishistic splendour of style, this erasure of subjective depth is in its own way a telling political gesture. One cannot get one's rawly personal experience, as artist and homosexual, against the "naturalness" of bourgeois norms, since it is implicit in one's political case that such apparently immediate experience is quite as socially constructed as the codes it calls into question. Better, then, to

Within the system

Julian Graffy

E.W. GALAN
Historic Structures: The Prague School
Project, 1928-1946
209pp. Croom Helm. £22.50.
0709 38160

Until recently, Western historians of literary theory in the twentieth century have tended either to ignore the achievements of the Czech Structuralists - scholars working in Prague between 1926 and 1946 (the so-called "Prague School" or "Prague Linguistic Circle") - or to reduce them to a mere offshoot of Russian Formalism. Certainly there are strong links between the two groups. When the Prague Linguistic Circle held its first meeting, in October 1926, Roman Jakobson, who had moved to Prague from Russia in 1920, was among those present and was elected its first vice-president. Other important members of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, the Muscovite branch of Russian Formalism, joined him there. Two outstanding Petrograd Formalists, members of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language, Yuri Tynyanov and Boris Tomashevsky, visited Prague and gave influential lectures.

Among the Formalist ideas which the Prague School found fruitful were the application of recent developments in linguistics to the consideration of poetic language: Lev Jakubinsky's differentiation between practical and poetic language, and Jakobson's refinement of it into the practical, poetic and emotional functions of language; culminating in his famous notion that "Poetry is language in its aesthetic function". But the theories of the Prague School need to be considered also in contexts other than the Formalist one and not least against a vigorous native tradition of aesthetic theory. Czech Structuralism moved on from its initial concerns, eventually far beyond the study of language and literature to which the Formalists mainly confined themselves.

In 1928, Tynyanov and Jakobson produced a first survey of the problems currently facing literary theorists. In it they stress the value of the concept of system, structure: "In the study of literature, a notion which proved a fertile one for Prague School theory. The School's theory of 1929 asserts that 'The poetic work is a functional structure, and the individual element cannot be understood outside their context to the whole.' In 1931, Jan Mukatovsky, the innovative and prolific leader of the

exchange the existential scream of protest for the science of semiology, which in a cunning dialectical move will appropriate the aloof, analytical discourse of academia only to turn it devastatingly against academia.

This, in effect, is the strategy of the earlier, high-structuralist Barthes of the 1960s, several of whose classic essays - "Éléments de sémiologie", "L'Ancienne Rhétorique", "L'Analyse structurale des récits" - are reprinted in *L'Aventure sémiologique*. What resists the natural, in this early phase of Barthes's work, is nothing less than signification itself, which refuses the brute self-identity of objects and scandalously reduces the transcendental symbol of bourgeois aesthetics to the flat, systemic difference of the Saussurean sign. "System, as we know", Barthes once commented sardonically, "is the declared enemy of man and of art"; liberal humanism has suffered many grievous rebuffs in its time, but it cannot really survive the perception that even our most intricate inwardness is the effect of a structure. Barthes will thus maliciously proceed to carve up the text of Genesis into signifying units ("La lutte avec l'ange"), decompose narratives into their syntagmatic and paradigmatic codes, shift with aplomb from the rhetoric of Balzac to that of beefsteak. The outraged professors of the Sorbonne, not to speak of their scandalized liberal-empiricist confrères across the Channel, could not complain that this was done with anything but the most impeccable academic sang-froid - a grave, poker-faced parody of conventional

in general, and in so doing provided a revealing structural analysis of Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*.

By the mid-1930s, the concept of art as structure had given way to that of art as sign. The first issue of the Prague School's new journal, *Slovo a slovesnost* (The Word and Verbal Art, 1935), declared that: "The problem of the sign is one of the most pressing philosophical problems of the cultural rebirth of our era . . . all of reality . . . appears to modern man as a vast and complex realm of signs." Or as Mukatovsky put it four years later: "The essence and destiny of structuralist aesthetics are to elaborate the system of the comparative semiotics of art." Aesthetics is now "part of the general science of signs", an understanding which led to a considerable broadening of the Prague School's interests. Jakobson and Mukatovsky put it four years later: "The essence and destiny of structuralist aesthetics are to elaborate the system of the comparative semiotics of art." Aesthetics is now "part of the general science of signs", an understanding which led to a considerable broadening of the Prague School's interests. Jakobson and Mukatovsky wrote remarkably perceptively on film, the younger scholar, Felix Vodicka, opened up the area of reader reception theory, and Mukatovsky turned to wider questions of aesthetics and to the relationship of art and society in history.

In *Historic Structures*, F. W. Galan provides the first book-length study of the Prague School. He traces the course of its literary and aesthetic theories by means of detailed and rewarding analyses of individual articles, mostly by Jakobson and Mukatovsky. He considers at length the latter's studies of the Czech writers Měcha and Polak, in order to demonstrate how Mukatovsky's theoretical approach evolved. He contrasts Jakobson's 1934 essay "What is Poetry?" with the views he had expressed in a 1921 study of Kulebikov; Galan is revealing also on the school's contribution to the theory of film, through Jakobson's study of the aesthetic potentialities of sound and Mukatovsky's comparison of the way space and time are treated in the cinema, the theatre and narrative fiction.

In summarizing the Prague School's achievements Galan concedes their failure to produce a unified theoretical framework by which to study literary history, or a structuralist semiotic history of Czech literature. But in a book which, though densely written, is continually instructive and illuminating, he reveals the extraordinary range and vitality of their ideas, whose influence is only now being fully

scholarship whose serene, fastidious tones barely conceal the most impudently subversive of intents.

Around the early 1970s, however, the whole Barthesian project shifts gradually into reverse gear. If the natural is the essence of ideology, and if ideology is itself a signifying practice, then there is a troubling sense in which the semiotician, in reducing nature to system, ends up by producing a mirror image of the very oppressive régime of meaning he sought to oppose. The natural appears brutally material, and so must be unmasked as sign; but such demystification threatens in an idealist gesture to eradicate those very forms of materiality - the erotic body, the thickened textures of an oil painting, the palpability of the written letter - which might just hold out against ideology's own systematizing impulse, its world of translucent meaning. The essays included in *The Responsibility of Forms*, written mainly during the 1970s, thus swoop repetitively on those stray material fragments which elude the embrace of the sign, those gestures or nuances which even the most elaborate semiology must fail to formalize. It is a move from text to texture - from "gloss" as annotation to "gloss" as material shock. Like Freud before him, the later Barthes seeks to install himself at the very juncture of sign and body, semiotic and somatic, meaning and materiality. It is no wonder that he shares his compatriots' endless fascination with food, where system and pleasure, art and labour, symbol and body, meaning and material transformation, converge into a single practice.

So it is that the early Barthes, who detested the obtuseness of the natural, will find himself in "The Third Meaning" obsessed precisely by what he terms the "obscure meanings" of cinema, those signifiers-without-signifieds (an odd facial expression, the look of a crumpled garment) which disrupt all "metalinguage" and trigger off some strange leakage or depletion of formal meaning. There is a superb essay here on the French artist Erté, whose haunting figures, at once female body and letter of the alphabet, would, one feels, have had specially to be invented for Barthes's "somatographic" commentary had they not already existed. Erté, Barthes claims, "makes the garment sensuous and the body into a signifier"; he has grasped that the materiality of writing is best revealed by its fetishistic dismemberment into discrete letters, and most cunningly concealed by its metonymic linking into words. A similar exchange between meaning and materiality happens in the paintings of Arcimboldo, whose human faces are at once forcefully expressive and mechanically decomposable into fruits and vegetables.

Two pieces on the craftily childish scrawlings of Cy Twombly find traced on these curious graphics the bodily gestures which produced them, in the nervous turn of the letters, the



A detail of a design by Dufy reproduced from *Giftwraps by Artists: Raoul Dufy* (16pp. New York: Abrams; distributed in Britain by Thames and Hudson. £8.65. 081092933 8).

spurt of the ink, the tensile quality of the strokes. Writing for the later Barthes is quite literally a muscular, corporeal matter - the secretion or sedimentation of a human body which "always exceeds the exchange in which it is caught up", which, beyond all commerce, communication, political virtue, will finally touch an extreme point where "it gives itself for nothing". Much the same can be said of the singing voice, whose peculiar "grain" is for Barthes "the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue" ("The Grain of the Voice"), signifying rather than meaning.

Barthes was no doubt astute to sense that his early semiological enterprise, for all its heterodoxy and panache, was in danger of giving comfort to the ideological enemy. In their sweep from Stendhal to striptease, structuralism and semiology challenged the zealously policed divisions of academic labour; but viewed from another angle they could be seen just as easily as colonizing forays by academia into new areas, buttressing its power by pulling sensational new subcultural objects into its orbit. In shifting his focus to the perverse, aberrant and irreducible, however, Barthes surely overestimated the systematic character of ruling ideologies. For what if such ideologies operate less by formal meaning than by the implicit, "obscure" and unformalizable, by texture, gesture and rhythm? To counterpose pleasure to ideology, the libidinal body to formal signification, is then just as rigid a binary opposition as anything to be found in Lévi-Strauss. Though the later Barthes was often enough guilty of such uncritical dualism, the power of these essays lies in their calculated ambivalence, as they pose themselves precariously on that "edge" or "join" in cultural life where meaning embraces, but never wholly exhausts, material process.

SUMMER READING IN COUNTRY LIFE



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Utopia lost

Brendan Bradshaw

JOHN DOSSY
Christianity in the West 1400-1700
189pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50
(paperback, £3.95).
019 2191748

Presumably a latter-day Alice, schooled more sternly on the O and A level syllabuses, on first looking into John Bossy's *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*, would not be disappointed at its lack of "pictures and conversations". Indeed, she would probably be relieved not to find, for once, the heavy-jowled heresiarch who bestrides that epoch, glowering out at her from frontispiece or dust-jacket. What might elicit initial disappointment from your Alice these days is the author's casual way with figures: the book lacks statistical tables, and the few dates that it provides are rounded out to the relevant *annus Domini*. And what would certainly excite her wonder is Professor Bossy's initiation in the preface that he regards the religion of late medieval Europe as a distinctly good thing and the Protestant and Catholic Reformations that put an end to it as more or less equally awful. "Curiouser and curiouse", one imagines her murmuring as she contemplates the Reformation detached from its causes.

Bossy's treatment of perhaps the most crucial period of transition in the history of Western Christianity has a touch of Lewis Carroll about it. He wants us to look with new eyes upon the world familiar to us through the writings of Reformation historians. He wants to question their assumptions, to challenge the consensus within which the debate about the Reformation has been conducted. He sets about it not by means of a frontal assault but by shifting the perspective and in quiet, unpretentious tones elaborating an alternative paradigm. Instead of viewing late medieval religion from the standpoint of the age of reform which succeeded it he sets out to explore that culture on its own terms and to approach the Reformation from there.

If we proceed in that way, he suggests, we are in for a big surprise. What we find in late medieval Europe is not an ignorant, superstitious, only partially Christianized population, groaning under the tyranny of a power-loving and money-grabbing Church — a population therefore in need of Christian enlightenment and liberation, and a decadent Church in need of reform. On the contrary, Bossy asserts, Christianity was alive and well. In fact, the drift of his argument is that the West would never be so thoroughly Christian again. The notorious aperturism which has been discerned in the religious culture of the period, its supposed pagan folk-beliefs and customs, existed as such only in the minds of its critics. The outrage of the reformers is not to be explained in terms of pagan survivalism, parasitic magic, etc., entrenched in popular religion, as social historians such as Keith Thomas and Peter Burke have recently suggested. Rather the explanation lies in a discrepancy between two conceptions of Christianity itself, which provide the matter of Bossy's book, so that it constitutes an essay in intellectual history — but intellectual history with a difference.

That difference might be explained at the risk of pedantry by redefining Bossy's area of concern as perceptions rather than conceptions of Christianity. What interests him is not the objective but the subjective aspect of the ideas he explores, not their intellectual content as such but their cultural signification, what they reflect of contact with a specific human environment, of assimilation within a particular social, ideological and intellectual milieu. In that respect his book constitutes a distinguished contribution to the relatively new type of historical enquiry to which the French have applied the not readily translatable label *mentalité* — the philosophical basis for which may already be discerned in the scholastic maxim *quidquid recipitur, de modo recipitur recipitur*. The exercise called for the versatility of a jack of all trades, in researching the whole range of Christian thought and practice, theological, liturgical, spiritual, devotional, moral. This jack of all trades has proved himself skilled in every one.

ity from the inside presents not the exotic patchwork of conventional historiography — a highly intellectualized theology, a crudely materialized devotionalism, etc. — but a seamless garment. In it theology, liturgy, devotion, moral doctrine are all informed by a common understanding of the nature of the Christian religion, the key to which lies in the cultural forms and habits of thought of a kin society. Bossy devotes the first and larger part of his book to a demonstration of this thesis. His overriding conception is of a religion which operated as "a saving mechanism of social integration". For the theological context of that idea we may look to the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin, which envisages men's natural condition as one of enmity with God and with their fellow men; more precisely, to the corollary of that doctrine, a view of Christian salvation as comprehending the restoration of amity not only between God and men but among men as well. Bossy argues that the major preoccupation of late medieval religion was with the realization of such a state of amity (charity), effected in accordance with the modes of a kin society, for example, social incorporation, participation, solidarity, restitution. The thesis is supported by an analysis that runs the gamut from St Augustine's seminal soteriological doctrine — his explanation of the Redemption — through the characteristic devotions and ritual practices of the period, to its ethical system based on the Seven Deadly (social) Sins and its mechanisms of social integration (lay fraternities, etc.). In the process, he rescues from the category of the bizarre, and/or endows with unsuspected religious significance, many of the familiar features of medieval religion — such as the cults of the saints and of the dead, the doctrines of purgatory and of indulgences — and many that are less familiar, for instance the Eucharistic "Pax", the spiritual relationships of affinity and kindred, etc.

In the second part of the book Bossy proceeds in the same way to analyse "the translation of Christianity", the transformation that occurred in the Reformation. Here three concerns emerge: to characterize the contrast between the new religious culture and the old; to characterize the affinity between the two forms of the new religious culture, Protestantism and Counter-Reformation Catholicism; and to point out what Christianity lost in translation. The key lies in the change, the transformation from kin to civil society. Bossy demonstrates a whole range of affinities between Protestantism and Counter-Reformation Catholicism that identify them with the emerging civil society and set both apart from traditional Christianity.

Three cultural characteristics seem especially important. One relates to habits of thought and consciousness. Bossy draws attention to a shift from the social, kin-centred perception of Christian life and belief to one centred on the individual (and the family), as for example in the understanding of penance in terms of inward dispositions (repentance) rather than social restitution (satisfaction), or of Christian perfection in terms of personal virtue (discipline) rather than sharing in the benefits of the communion of saints (merit). The second characteristic relates to modes of social intercourse, where Bossy detects a shift from symbol and ritual to the intellectual, literary mode that characterized civil society. Here the demonstration hinges on the promotion of Word at the expense of Sacrament in the new dispensation, and it succeeds brilliantly in linking the Counter-Reformation with the supposedly Protestant ethos of the Word by drawing out the cultural implications of that notion, and by showing that the commitment of the Counter-Reformation to a word-based *modus operandi* — involving, for instance, print, textualism, "link-divinity", pedagogy (catechism) — undermined the social functions of the sacraments. The third shift Bossy spotlights is a transformation of the social role of religion, effected largely by two departures from traditional Christianity: the adoption of the Ten Commandments in place of the Seven Deadly Sins as the ethical code; with the concomitant development of a cult of law and obedience in place of that of fraternity and peace; and the reduction of the religious of Christianity from pure to "social miracle", that is to say, to pursuit of a social

the concomitant sacralization of secular sovereignty.

The final aspect of Bossy's analysis reflects the originality of his perspective on this entire process. Where the conventional historiography occupies itself in marking milestones on the road to modernity, he counts the cost. The impoverishment of religion which he believes took place in its cultural transformation may be summarized under the headings of print and privacy. The "tyranny of print" exercised through the proliferation of all sorts of authoritative texts, credal, liturgical, catechetical, had the effect, Bossy suggests, of inhibiting those qualities of intuition, spontaneity and creativity that are central to the religious experience, and that were so marked a feature of the late Middle Ages. Privacy refers to the



Peter Paul Rubens' "Il perdono di Assisi" is taken from Andrea Emilian's *Pederico Barocci* (464pp. Milan: Nuova Alfa, £58), which will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

desocialization Bossy sees as accompanying the rise of personalized religion.

One example concerns the celebration of the Eucharist. Despite profoundly differing theological perspectives, Bossy points out, the revised liturgies reflect a common social perspective. In every case the climax of the action was altered from the communal sharing of the Pax (the kiss of peace), as it had been in the traditional mass, to one form or other of spiritual communion; and the congregation now participated from the privacy of family pews, the communion of the nave having suffered enclosure for the purpose. This new approach to the central act of Christian worship is paralleled, and its social significance pointed up, in a second example: what happened to the theological virtue of charity. In 1400, according to Bossy, charity meant "the state of Christian love... an occasion; or body of people seeking to embody that state". In 1700 it meant "an optimistic judgement about others; an act of benevolence... an institution erected as a result of such an act". Behind this deflated conception Bossy draws attention to a fundamental shift in the orientation of Christianity. Whereas the traditional preoccupation was with realizing precisely this state of perfect sociability, the consummation towards which the reformers aspired was holiness, the perfection of the individual in virtue. This supremely epitomizes in Bossy's account the world that was lost in the translation of Christianity.

It remains to consider what credence is to be given to Bossy's curious story, assuming, as it were, the critical role of Alice's elder sister. A problem here is the book's enigmatic critical apparatus. Conceived as an interpretative essay and published in the *Opus Books* series designed for a general readership, Bossy's exercise in revisionism comes with only a handful of endnotes and a summary guide to further reading. This usually draws attention to the

the book had its gestation, but the result may be to render the sceptic still more sceptical. The question thus arises whether Bossy has stumbled to an occupational hazard: what might be called the Margaret Mead syndrome — a euphoric state induced by concern to achieve a sympathetic understanding of a remote culture, manifested in an idealized description of the social arrangements, life-style, etc. of the community under scrutiny. Bossy's analysis of the religion of late medieval Europe lost to idealization since his interest was precisely the ideals embodied in its practice. His elucidation of those ideals serves, therefore, as the measure both of his success and of its limitations — since his analysis fails to relate to the model, as he ideally reconstructs it, to the historical circumstances in which it was supposed to operate.

The questions raised by the contemporary critique of late medieval religion seem especially pertinent. One concerns the capacity of the machinery which traditional Christianity deployed to fulfil the functions for which it was designed. The "saving machinery of social integration" had never been so feverishly exploited as in the later Middle Ages: recent research points to a fifteenth-century boom in "supernatural works". Yet the state of "enhanced sociability" which this machinery was designed to promote was ever further from realization: war on an unprecedented scale was tearing Christian Europe apart, while Christian society exhibited all the signs of disintegration, riot, crime, corruption and, above all, the ruthless exploitation of the weak and the poor by the rich and powerful. That anomaly provides the basis of Thomas More's scathing critique of late medieval Christianity in *Utopia* and, *ipso facto*, raises the question of Utopianism in Bossy's account of the same phenomenon. Second, the question arises of the intellectual credibility of late medieval religion in the mental climate of the Renaissance.

How adequate was the Augustinian-scholastic synthesis, and the Christian vision which it inspired, in the light of the new perception of the human condition and of the possibility of betterment generated by humanism? The answer of history seems to be that change was necessary and, in any case, inevitable. Considerations such as these must, therefore, temper our enthusiasm for the generous Christian vision which inspired late medieval religion, and which Bossy's sensitive, subtle and evocative analysis has recovered after centuries of incomprehension and hostility.

Turning to his account of the reformed religious culture of the early modern period, I find my enthusiasm tempered by different considerations. No doubt others will cavil at the bleak prospect he offers here but I shall not be one to do so: to maintain that change was necessary and inevitable by 1500 is not to maintain that the change which actually took place was for the better. My objection here is not to Bossy's general conclusion but to his argument in particular, specifically to his sociological reading of the contemporary assertion that "Erasmus had the eggs that Luther hatched". Erasmus figures in Bossy's account as the serpent who tempted Luther to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, and, thereafter, Erasmus himself rather than Protestantism or Counter-Reformation Catholicism is designated as the evil genius of the Reformation. Poor Erasmus! Having been roundly denounced by Luther in his lifetime, having had his *opera omnia* posthumously blacklisted for the Society of Jesus by Ignatius Loyola, he now finds himself being the oblique of corrupting them all. The epiphany of Bossy's account is that at the same time it presents Thomas More, Erasmus's Christian humanist lieutenant and first supporter in the end, as a lonely seraph defending the paradise of medieval Christianity with flaming sword.

Despite all of this, John Bossy's analysis of the reformed religious culture must be reckoned a major achievement in opening up new dimensions to the study of late medieval religion, and in the case of late medieval religion, dimensions that the conventional religious history has hidden from view. It is to be hoped that the perpetuation of one use or another by a scholar of such calibre will fuel further eye-opening concerning the need to

Bonds and members

Nigel Barley

J. S. LA FONTAINE
Ritual drama and secret knowledge
209pp. Manchester University Press. £15.
0190 19654

In anthropology, it is commonplace for books on a particular theme to begin by discounting the reality of the phenomenon under study. It is perhaps significant that J. S. La Fontaine in *Ritual drama and secret knowledge* across the world seeks neither to affirm nor deny the reality of initiation, but contents herself with a few definitional quibbles before accepting a "rough and ready" demarcation of the area that will be discussed. Thus, passage of a set of individuals into membership of a group is initiation, whereas individual rites of maturity are not. On the other hand, conferment of the social status of adulthood is initiation even if entry to some other social grouping is not involved, such being the standard anthropological convention. The result is, through definition, a work centred on the social rather than the cultural. Only later does it become clear how crucial is this primary limiting of the category, in that all the most difficult areas of interpretation are neatly excised. Professor La Fontaine refuses to grapple with the fact that local ethnic genres and Western analytical categories do not mesh. We deal with ritual as reclassification, demonstration, subjective change of vision, symbolic statement, etc. but seldom is it allowed to engage reality.

The book begins with a helpful survey of theories of religion and their relevance to the study of initiation. It assumes very little prior knowledge and is clearly intended for an undergraduate audience. La Fontaine regrets the increasing proliferation of different "sorts" of initiation as undermining the generality and power of the original insight — a strange observation in view of her own rather idiosyncratic construction of the "initiation" category. She is particularly effective when dealing, for example, the suggested correlation between initiation and organization by mutual descent. There follow accounts of Aschey Richards's well-known exegesis of female initiation rites among the Ndebele, and of Victor Turner on the Ndebele;

yet "concentration on meaning ignores much that is fundamental to religion: specifically that it is social action".

La Fontaine further treats secret knowledge via the Masons and Triads: in these cases the main secret seems to be who is or is not a member, which constitutes a bond between insiders. There is a consideration of oaths and ordeals via the Nyoro spirit cult and the Mau Mau, oaths being taken not as a free pledge but as a sign of submission to authority. A consideration of Hopi and Mende spatial categories and relations with spirits shows that "secret societies" are not all anti-establishment, that they may embody received orthodoxy or have both a public and private face.

The most awkward chapter is the one discussing the "maturity rituals" that have already been made marginal to the "initiation" category. Individual accommodations to physical puberty are not held to constitute initiation proper. La Fontaine uses the fact that some cultures hold them apart to justify the view that they should be treated separately for all cultures. "The initiands are... objects used in the ritual, rather than its central focus, through which the ritual is to be explained. Initiation rituals cannot be understood simply as a means of changing the status of individuals." A universal distinction is made between physical states and social categories. Discussing circumcision, she sums up:

Nowhere except in the secular hospitals of western Europe and America is it performed simply as surgery for practical reasons. While many peoples may justify its practice in hygienic or cosmetic terms, as is the case in the West, everywhere else it is part of a ritual transition and therefore such reasons do not explain it.

No consideration is given to the possibility that we are, for example, lumping together under the heading "circumcision" all manner of actions of quite different kinds, or that non-Western notions of the practical have to be confronted.

Towards the end of the book, "the problem of women" looms large. La Fontaine deals deftly with some anthropological favourites such as male menstruation and "natural" female puberty as opposed to "cultural" male maturation. A brief series of conclusions offers an overview which is largely functionalist: initiation affirms traditional knowledge, morality, the authority of the elders. As anthropologists used to say, it upholds social structure.

Among the Maasai

Tim Ingold

PETER RIGBY
Pastoralists: Nomadic societies in transition
209pp. Zed Books. £16.95 (paperback, £6.50).
0022 226 X

Among anthropological students of East Africa and elsewhere, Peter Rigby is well known for his work on the Woggo people of central Tanzania. Since this work was published, in 1969, Rigby has undergone what he describes as a "radical theoretical, methodological and personal transformation" to which *Pastoralists* is supposed to be a testament. He has also, since 1975, engaged intermittently in fieldwork among the Iparakuyo, a section of the Tanzania Maasai, who are the "persistent pastoralists" of his title (though in view of his categorical disclaimer that either the Iparakuyo or other Maasai are "nomadic in any accurate sense of the term", one wonders what is the point of the subtitle). "My relatively unusual personal and emotional absorption into the Iparakuyo society", Rigby writes, "has been the dominant influence in the process of my theoretical and practical enlightenment."

And yet this absorption was unusual, he decries, but judged by the evidence of this book, it is not. Its consequence has been any enlightenment. This is especially unlikely, since he manifestly has the interests of the Iparakuyo at heart and is motivated by a scholar of such calibre will fuel further eye-opening concerning the need to

of the assumptions underlying programmes of pastoral development, many of which are both seriously misguided and the cause of much distress among the subject peoples. Rigby's book, however, is not likely to convince readers that he has anything constructive to offer in their place.

Yet the book is not without interest. Written as separate papers over a period of six years (and three have been previously published) and juxtaposed here without revision, the chapters deal respectively with the challenges of participant observation in a pastoral community, the significance of meat-eating and sharing, the representation of time and history, the effects of missionary influence, and the dynamics of pastoral production itself.

But all these topics are incidental to Rigby's declared objective, which is no less than "to develop a historical materialist critique of the nature and relevance of certain contemporary theories in social and cultural anthropology". Each chapter, then, follows a roughly similar pattern: the first part consists of "critique", on to which is tacked some interesting, but generally half-digested, empirical material about the Iparakuyo. Rigby makes no attempt to analyse this material, but leaves it behind in glib pursuit of the inflated vision of those so-called structural Marxists whose side he is on. He blandly dismisses the rest as a product of "bourgeois" thought.

Claiming to be both a major contribution to a social theory and an ethnographic tribute to a particular pastoral people, this book falls disastrously between the two schools. The ethnography simply disintegrates in the face of

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TLS April 26 1985



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